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ABSTRACT

An attempt was made to improve students' academic grades and students' opinions of themselves as learners through the use of alternative assessments. The format of mastery learning using the direct instruction practice model was combined with performance-based assessment to increase achievement, self-esteem, and higher level thinking skills. Researchers selected five students from a sixth-grade heterogeneous mathematics class at a junior high school and five students from a ninth-grade honors English class at a high school. Students were given pretests and posttests at the beginning and end of each unit and were asked to complete charts before and after the experimental instruction indicating what they knew (K), what they wanted to know (W), and what they learned (L). The KWL chart served as an alternative assessment, as did "PMI" (Plus, Minus, Interesting) charts rating topics learned, portfolios, and improvement rubrics allotting bonus improvement points. The use of pretests and posttests allowed the teachers to see that the students were improving. The other assessment strategies also appeared helpful in promoting academic achievement and student self-esteem. The use of bonus improvement points was a good incentive for student improvement. Nineteen appendixes contain sample charts and examples of conventional and alternative assessments. (Contains 26 references.) (SLD)

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ED 435 659

IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

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RESEARCH PROTOCOL

ABSTRACT

IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS

The purpose of the study is to improve students' academic grades and to improve students' opinions of themselves as learners. In conjunction with traditional instruction, the researchers will administer pre and posttests at the beginning and end of each unit. Students will also be asked to complete a pre and post KWL chart. This chart will indicate what the students know, what they want to know, and what they have learned. Student responses to these assessments will be compiled in a student portfolio along with their reflections on their growth. In addition, a PMI chart will be utilized to record student opinions of themselves as learners. A final data collection instrument will be an improvement rubric, which gives incentive points for improvement.

The purpose of this study was realized and students showed improvement in their academic grades. Their improved opinions of themselves were evident in their responses on the PMI charts and in their reflections recorded in their portfolios.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONCERN

General Statement of Problem

Students that are labeled slow learners or high achievers in the targeted Junior High and High School populations probably, in part, have exhibited an inability to recognize their own progress and improvement due to the standard grading scale. Consequently, slow learners tend to experience repeated failure and low self-esteem. Whereas, high achievers tend to perform for the academic grade alone instead of being intrinsically motivated by the pursuit of knowledge.

We have observed undesirable behaviors in the same student populations as they've progressed from the Junior High to the High School levels. We believe several factors could be causing the problem, but we are perplexed as to its specific causes. We are concerned that these factors may include lack of immediate corrective feedback, assessments that aren't meaningful to our students, and an inabiljty of students to recognize their own growth.

Immediate Problem: Setting A

Forrester Junior High School, the only middle school in its district, has 627 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders enrolled, based on the 1996-1997 figures. These students are grouped heterogeneously for math, science, social studies, and language arts. The students are grouped homogeneously for Direct Instruction

Reading. The average class size is 23.9 students. The time devoted to the teaching of each subject is 43 minutes (site A School Report Card, 1997).

Students belong to a team of two teachers in sixth grade, and to a team of four teachers in seventh and eighth grade. Students leave the team for physical education, art, music, drama, Direct Instruction Reading, and computer. Direct Instruction Reading is a scripted reading program, which is taught for one hour each morning at all grade levels. Foreign language is offered to eighth grade students only as an early bird class, which is also outside the team. In addition, students may leave their regular class to work with the Resource teacher in any subject area that is indicated on the student's Individualized Education Plan in the sixth and seventh grades. Inclusion is practiced in eighth grade classes only, where the Resource teacher works in the classroom with the regular teacher.

The racial-ethnic background of Forrester Junior High School as of September, 1996 was 27.6% White, 65.7% Black, 5.6% Hispanic, 0.8% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.3% Native American. Low-income students are from families receiving public aid, living in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, from foster homes, or are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches. The percentage of Low-income students at Forrester Junior High School is 49.1% compared to the lower state rate of 35.7% (site A School Report Card, 1997).

The attendance rate at Forrester Junior High School is 92.6%; however, the chronic truancy rate is 5.4%. Of the 627 students enrolled, 35 of them were chronically truant. Moreover, the student mobility rate, the percent of students

who move in and out of the school district, is 19.7% for the school. This percentage is lower than the overall district's rate of 38.8% (site A School Report Card, 1997).

Students in eighth grade are assessed by the state of Illinois in reading, writing, and math, while the students in seventh grade are assessed in social studies and science. In addition, all students in grades six, seven, and eight are assessed with the Terra-Nova test which is a performance-based test and this test is given in the core subjects of math, reading, science, social studies, and language arts. Students are also assessed at mid-term each quarter with a progress report which identifies students as having an average grade point average, are in danger of failing or failing a class. Quarterly, students are assessed with a district-wide report card and receive letter grades A, B, C, D, or F.

Immediate Problem: Setting B

Southern High School is the youngest school of the three campuses in the District 222. The students at Southern are assigned to classes based on their eighth grade performance on the Gates-McGinite Test along with their eighth grade teacher recommendations. Students remain in the designated track until otherwise determined.

Southern High School has just completed a two-year pilot eight block-scheduling program. This pilot was approved for permanent implementation for the1998-99 school year. Students attend eight classes per semester under this educational system. Each class session is held for 85 minutes. Their classes, however, are divided into an "A" day schedule and a "B" day schedule. On "A"

days, students only attend their first through fourth period class and "B" days period five through eight. To successfully meet graduation requirements, students must complete a minimum of four years of English, two years of social studies, two years of mathematics, one semester of health, one year of science, one semester of a business course, one year of fine arts, and one semester of computer science. 85% of the 1996-97 senior class fulfilled this expectation (site B School Report Card).

According to the 1996-97 School Report Card, the total enrollment of Southern High School was 1,073 with an average class size of 20.9. The student body is made up of 35.8% White, 60.2% Black, 2.5% Hispanic, 1.5% Asian, and 0.0% Native American (site B School Report Card).

The attendance rate at Southern is 94.6% as compared to the 93.8% state average. Whereas, the number of students who were absent from school for no valid cause was six students, or 0.4% of the student population for the last 180 days. (Site B School Report Card).

Students are evaluated on a standard cumulative grade point average scale with 4.0 exceeding expectations. In addition to this standard scale, the Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP) also assesses students during their sophomore years in reading, mathematics, and writing. Science and social studies are tested during their junior year. Another assessment device often used during the senior year is the American College Testing Program (ACT). (Site B School Report Card).

National Context of the Problem

Assessment is an essential component of the teaching-learning process. Without effective classroom assessment, it is impossible for us to know whether our students are learning what we want them to learn. (Ferrara & McTighe, 1992). Traditionally, students have been measured through paper-and-pencil tests and standardized testing. Through the years, educators have debated the need for more authentic and realistic assessments. "To be successful in the future, students need to develop at a high level of competency in complex reasoning strategies, effective communication skills, interpersonal skills to interact with others, lifelong learning strategies and productive habits of mind." (Huot, 1996). Many experts in education today have suggested alternative ways to assess performance such as the theory of performance-based assessment. According to Huot (1998),

> Performance assessment is a process that chiefly relies on the assessor's observations and professional judgment for the verification of students' learning on the basis of what students can *do* with their knowledge while carrying out complex performance tasks. Techniques for performance assessment include essay-writing assignments in which students analyze, synthesize and evaluate issues, the preparation of demonstrations, exhibition projects, computer simulations, and portfolios of work, and the undertaking of problem-solving exercises and similar tasks. (p.2).

In addition to different assessments, various types of teaching and learning strategies have been introduced and implemented in schools to help students

succeed in their endeavor to learn. Some of these include direct instruction, the science of teaching method, and Bloom's mastery learning. The aforementioned techniques involve the teacher taking charge of the lesson, teaching the lesson through visual and auditory means, guiding the students through the lesson and using corrective feedback for student errors. The students are then given an opportunity to independently work on the lesson, and are tested on the lesson for mastery. Proponents of these theories believe that all students can learn, given the right circumstances. Effective, motivating teachers blur the lines between teaching, learning, and assessment. (Wlodkowski & Jaynes, 1990). Consequently, "students take more responsibility for their own learning, are empowered by being involved in the teacher/learning process, and have a clearer idea of what is expected in terms of specific performance." (Pickett, 1997). One method used to achieve this goal is Direct Instruction. According to Heather Moody, "direct instruction is a teaching method that includes: orientation of the lesson, presentation of the new concept or skill, structured practice, guided practice, and independent practice...when students are actively engaged in learning, they do well academically because they are highly focused." (Moody, 1998).

We hope that by combining the format of mastery learning using the direct instruction practice model with the idea of performance-based assessment will increase our students' self-achievement, enhance their self-esteem, and will allow them to learn skills while also using higher levels of thinking. Our future depends on students who are knowledgeable, who are able to use critical thinking, and

who will have the ability to evaluate their performance, as well as, the ability to evaluate problems and solutions to problems.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Methods for collecting baseline data

The schools observed in this study were Forrester Junior High School and Southern High School. At Forrester Junior High, a sixth (6^{th}) grade heterogeneous math class was observed to collect data, while at Southern High School, a freshman honors' English class was the focus for the researchers. The researchers for the purpose of this study selected a random sample of five (5) students from each of the two classes. The rationale for using a random sample was that the researcher at Forrester was unable to obtain permission from all of the students' parents and guardians in order to include them in this study. The researcher from Forrester, while not including the results of all the students in this study, did record the results for all the students in the sixth (6^{th}) grade math class and has determined that the results of the random sample is indicative of all the students. To insure parallel results between the two different types of groups studied, the researcher at Southern also used a random sample. Likewise, the researcher at Southern discovered that the results of the random sample represented the results of all the students in the freshman honors English class. This same random sampling of students was used throughout the study, although the researchers consistently used all of the methods for collecting data as their basis for instructing their everyday classes. The researchers used several different criteria for collecting data to provide an accurate assessment of student learning.

This process began by administering a Student Perspective Survey to all students at Forrester Junior High School and Southern High School. (See Appendix A). The intent of the survey was to gauge students' opinions of themselves as learners and their

understanding of traditional assessment. To determine students' prior knowledge, the researchers asked students to take a pre-test before instruction began on each unit. Each researcher taught three units. (See Appendix B through G). Additional documentation of students' background knowledge was recorded through a KWL chart. (See Appendix H).

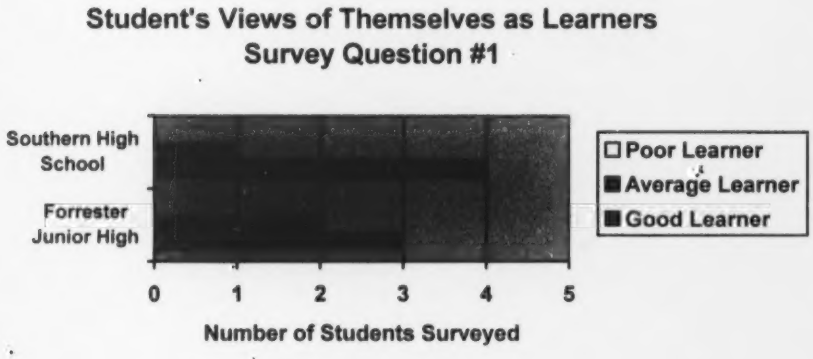
The researchers collected KWL baseline data differently at each setting. The researcher from Forrester had the students fill out the "K" and "W" section of the KWL while they were completing the pre-test. The researcher assured the students that this pre-test would not be counted in their formal grade and that they should do the best they could so results would be accurate. The researcher also informed the students that they should indicate anything they were having trouble understanding on the pre-test in the "W" column on the KWL chart. However, the researcher at Southern required students to complete the "K" and "W" columns prior to administering the pre-test. The researcher questioned students on specific content and when they were unable to answer correctly, or at all, they were encouraged to write that question in the "W" column.

Models to display data

The survey information was collected from all students at both Forrester Junior High School and Southern High School, but for the purpose of this study a random sampling of five students from each class was used. At Forrester Junior High School, the random sampling of students came from a sixth (6^{th}) grade heterogeneous math class, while at Southern High School, the sample was taken from a freshman honors' English class. The survey was administered in order to gauge students' opinions of themselves as learners and for the researchers to determine the students' understanding of the standard grading system. The researchers hypothesized that students failed to recognize that their grade would actually reflect the learning they had acquired over a period of time.

In order to test this theory, a four-question survey was given to the students. The students were asked to identify the type of learner they perceive themselves to be in the first of the four questions. The students were able to choose from the categories of good student, average student, and poor student. (See Appendix A). In Figure 1, the responses of the ten (10) sampled students are recorded.

Figure 1:



The graph shows student subjects' responses to the first survey question at both Forrester and Southern. Three of the five students at Forrester believed themselves to be good learners, whereas the two remaining subjects felt that they were only average learners. However, four of the five subjects at Southern considered themselves to be good learners and only one thought she was average.

The second survey question asked students to report their grade point average. The grade point average choices ranged from 4.0(A) to 0.0(F). (See Appendix A). Figure 2 reflects the responses of the sampled students from each setting.

Figure 2:

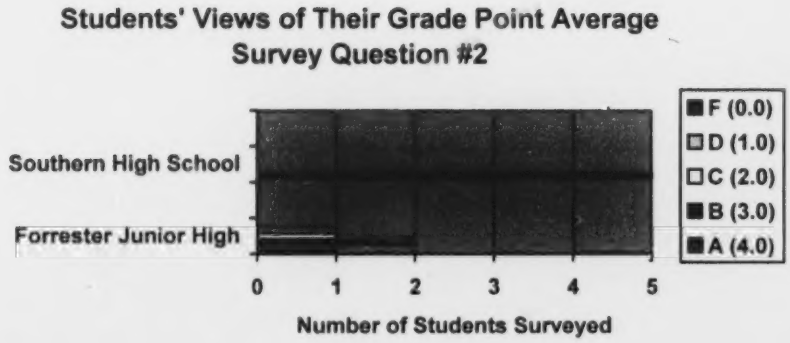
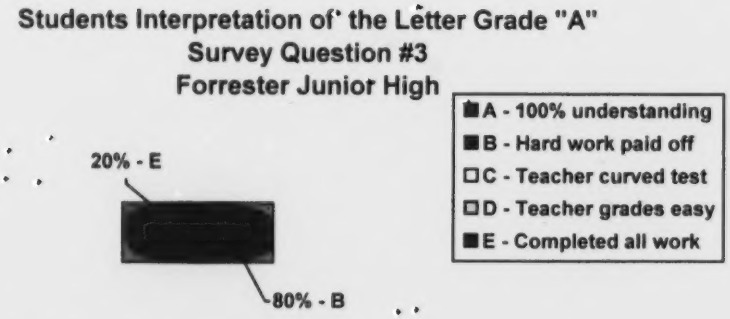


Figure 2 shows a wide range of reported responses from the students at Forrester. One student claimed to have a GPA of 4.0 and another said they had a 2.0. Two stated that their GPA was a 3.0 and the last survey participant declared their GPA to be a 1.0. The five student samples from Forrester are members of a heterogeneous math class, which would possibly account for the wide range of grade point averages. The responses were extremely different for the honors English students at Southern. All claimed to have a GPA of 4.0. These students obviously have a long history of academic success, but the question still remains as to what motivates them to achieve such high grades.

The third survey question was designed to address the issue of what motivates students to achieve high grades by trying to uncover students' understanding of the letter grade "A". (See Appendix A). The researchers believed that students had different interpretations of what excellent achievement means. Figure 3 depicts the Forrester students' opinions of what an "A" in the traditional grading system means. The researcher discovered that eighty-percent (80%) of the sampled students believed that if they studied really hard and earned a good grade, they would earn the letter grade of "A". Only one (1) out of the five (5) students sampled had a different interpretation of an "A" when compared to her classmates.

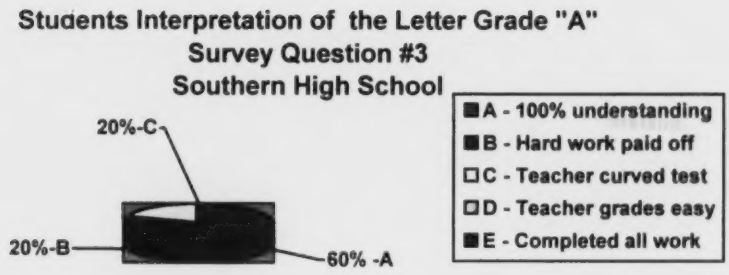
Figure 3:


Students Interpretation of the Letter Grade "A"
Survey Question #3
Forrester Junior High
A - 100% understanding
B - Hard work paid off
C - Teacher curved test
D - Teacher grades easy
E - Completed all work
20% - E
80% - B

The same four students at Forrester who considered themselves to be above average students with a GPA of 4.0(A) or 3.0(B) felt that they earned those grades because they studied really hard in order to achieve a good grade. The student who characterized herself as an "0.0(F)" student believed that she should get an "A" if she did all her work. The researcher proposes that four of the students sampled have a good work ethic, which will enable them to achieve and motivate them to learn. It was enlightening for the researcher to discover that some students have the opinion that they should get an "A" because they completed all their work. It will be a challenge for the researcher to teach the students that not only must all work be turned in but that the work must be of good quality in order to achieve.

Figure 4 shows the results of the sampled freshman honors English students' interpretations of what an "A" means to them.

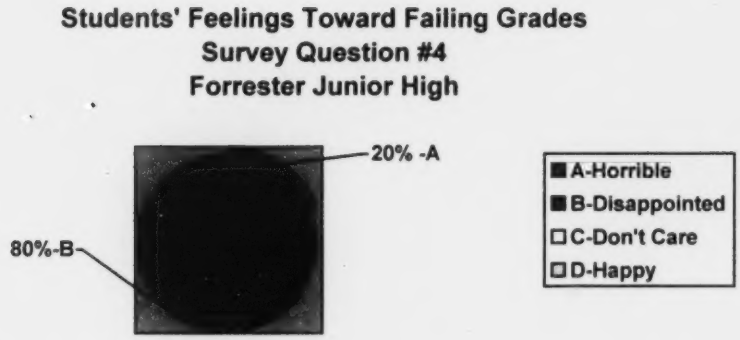
Figure 4:



60% of the student subjects at Southern felt that by getting the letter grade "A" meant that "I know everything and don't need to be in this class anymore" while 20% more modestly believed that getting an "A" meant that "I studied really hard and earned a good grade". The remaining 20% of the students surveyed held to the surprising belief "that I really don't need to work hard like everybody says because the teacher will curve the test anyway". It is this last 20% of surveyed students that gives this researcher cause to question whether or not students are truly motivated to learn not just for the grade but because they enjoy the process of learning. Hope was restored when the student responses to the question on how they felt when they received a failing grade were reviewed.

The final survey question addressed how a student feels when a failing grade is earned. The choices here ranged from happy to my life is coming to an end. (See Appendix A). Figure 5 shows the opinions of the sampled students at Forrester Junior High. These sixth (6^{th}) grade math students overall seemed to have a healthy outlook on getting a failing grade.

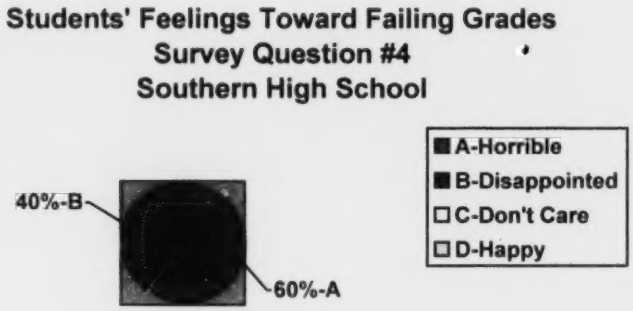
Figure 5:



Four of the five sampled sixth (6^{th}) grade math students decided they were disappointed when they receive a failing grade, but know they'll get over it. Only one of the students felt horrible and that her life was coming to an end. The researcher proposes that this relaxed attitude on the part of the majority of the sampled students perhaps prevent them from achieving at higher levels.

Figure 6 shows quite a contrast between freshman honors English students and sixth (6^{th}) grade math students. (See Figure 5). As seen in Figure 6, the higher achieving students viewed failing grades very negatively and seemed to interpret them more personally. The researchers possibly contribute this disparity to the differences in age and maturity from junior high school to high school.

Figure 6:



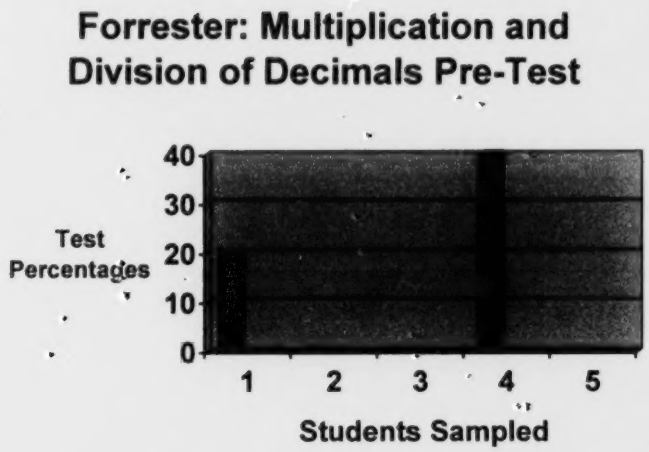
It was surprising to discover that 60% of surveyed students in the high school honors English class felt "horrible – like their life was coming to an end" when they received a failing grade. This seemed a rather harsh perspective for students who generally do so well overall. The remaining 40% of students had a more realistic view and claimed to "feel bad and disappointed, but that they would get over it". The fact that the majority of surveyed students take failing so seriously, may account for their overall high achievement.

Overall, the survey provided the researchers with very important baseline data in which to measure students growth and changed views throughout the experiment. The findings proved that most students believe themselves to be good students and learners. However, they recognize that receiving an "A" means that they worked hard to earn it. More disturbingly, the researchers discovered quite a difference between the students' feelings towards failing grades at the two different grade levels. The younger students in a heterogeneous math class seemed to deal with failing grades in a more casual manner, while the older students in an honors English class had a higher level of concern if they earned a failing grade. The researchers wonder if having a greater concern for high grades motivates high achieving students.

With these conclusions in mind, both researchers proceeded to administer pre-tests to measure students' prior knowledge of specific content. These tests were also given to provide the researcher with baseline data so comparisons could be made between the subjects' pre and posttest results, their perceptions of the "learning" that had taken place, and their attitude about themselves has learners.

The first pre-test given to the sixth (6^{th}) grade math students at Forrester Junior High School was on multiplication and division of decimal numbers. (See Appendix B). The results of the pre-test scores of the sampled students are indicated in Figure 7.

Figure 7:

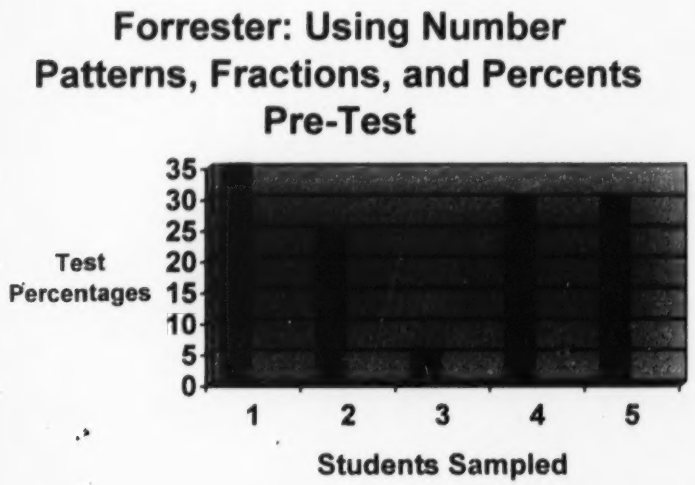


The topics included on this first pre-test were basic multiplying and dividing of decimal numbers, estimating sums, differences, products, and quotients of decimal numbers, and applications of multiplying and dividing decimal numbers. Three out of five of the students sampled scored a zero percent (0%) on the first pre-test. These results indicate that the students had no prior knowledge with which to multiply and divide decimal numbers. However, two out of the five students scored a twenty percent (20%)

and a forty percent (40%) respectively. Although, these students showed some prior knowledge, it was evident that further instruction was needed and much practice was required.

The next unit that was taught to the sixth (6^{th}) grade math class was on number patterns, fractions, and percents. Once again the students were given a pre-test before any instruction occurred. (See Appendix C). The second pre-test given to the sixth (6^{th}) grade students was on Chapter 4 – "Using Number Patterns, Fractions, and Percents". The material presented in this chapter was on divisibility patterns of numbers, greatest common factor, least common multiple/denominator, simplifying fractions and ratios, and writing percents from fractions. Figure 8 exhibits the pre-test scores of the five sampled students.

Figure 8:

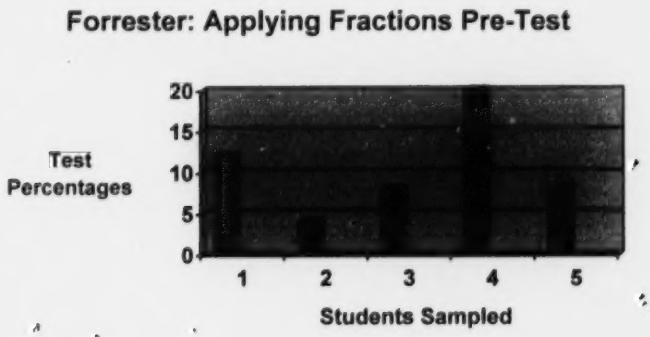


The students' scores as indicated in Figure 8 ranged from five percent (5%) to thirty-five percent (35%). The students indicated that they had previously learned how to simplify fractions and they were able to decipher if a number was divisible by another number. The students were unable to find the greatest common factor, least common

multiple/denominator, and writing a percent from a fraction was foreign material for them.

The last unit taught to the sixth (6^{th}) grade heterogeneous math class at Forrester Junior High School for the purpose of this study was on the application of fractions. The final pre-test administered during the study was on Chapter 7 – "Applying Fractions". (See Appendix D). This pre-test covered the skills and applications of adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing fractions and mixed numbers. It also covered estimating fractions, measurement, and finding the circumference of a circle. The sampled students' scores in Figure 9 again show that the students had some prior knowledge, but that instruction was necessary to achieve mastery of the topics in the chapter.

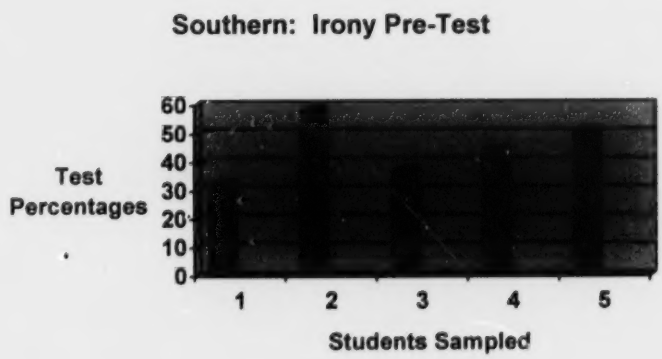
Figure 9:



The scores of the students on this pre-test were four percent (4%), two scores of eight percent (8%), twelve percent (12%), and twenty percent (20%). (See Figure 9). The students indicated that some prior knowledge was evident in the areas of estimating fractions and adding and subtracting fractions with like denominators. Weaknesses were evident in the areas of measurement, finding the circumference of a circle, adding and subtracting fractions with unlike denominators, and in multiplying and dividing fractions.

Likewise, pre-tests were given to the freshman honors English class students. The first pre-test given at Southern High School was on an Irony unit. (See Appendix E). The Irony pre-test asked students to demonstrate their basic understanding of the term irony and the three different types of irony. They were also asked to correctly label scenarios using these terms and to write their own ironic situations. Figure 10 represents the pre-test scores of the five (5) sampled students.

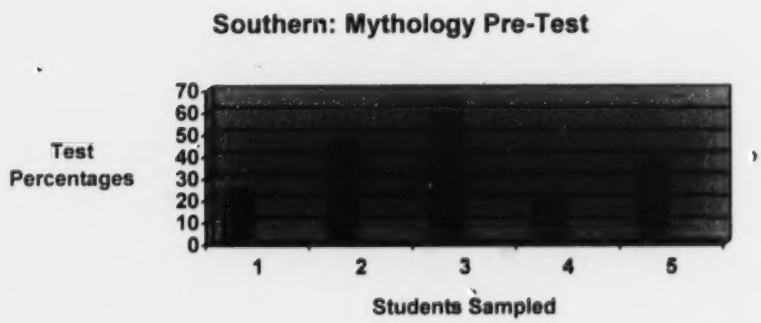
Figure 10:



The irony pretest results were not surprising to this researcher. Students took the pretest after they had completed the "K" column on the KWL chart. Student's responses on this chart revealed that they had very little prior knowledge of irony. Consequently, their scores left much to be desired. Their highest score was a 58% and the lowest was a 32%. Albeit, the scores were somewhat suspect due to the fact that the basic concept had been taught to students the year before and the unit was intended to be a review. Moreover, the test was taken after the improvement point scale was explained to the class.

Mythology made up the second major unit of study for the semester at Southern High School and as in the previous unit a pre-test was administered to the freshman honors English class. (See Appendix F). The Mythology pre-test concentrated primarily on the Ancient Greeks' views of how the world was created. Students were asked to explain the power, the realm, and symbol of as many as thirty (30) gods and goddesses. Figure 11 represents the pre-test scores of the five sampled students from this class. Students were again asked to complete the "K" column on the KWL chart to record their prior knowledge of "How the world was created by the ancient Greeks". Most students left the "K" column incomplete and the pretests were predictably low.

Figure 11:

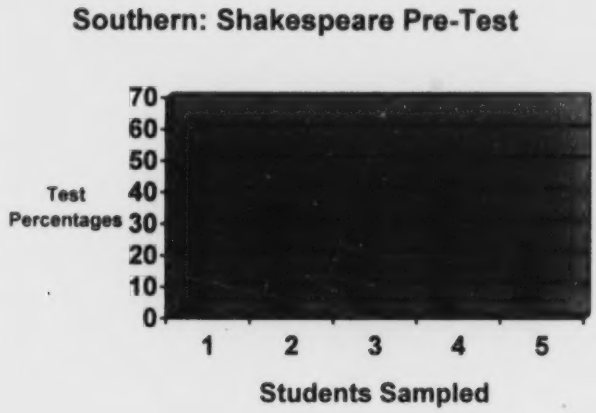


The scores were extremely low: the highest score was only 63% and the lowest was 23%. These low scores did not distress students because they knew they would obtain the maximum improvement points upon posttest comparison. Therefore, it is the belief of this researcher that these honors students compromised the pre-test data by taking calculated gambles with their grades judging from their joking remarks. The last pretest results confirmed these suspicions.

The final unit taught to the freshman honors English class at Southern High School was on Shakespeare's background information in preparation for the study of the

play Merchant of Venice. The background pre-test was made up of basic facts about William Shakespeare's life, writings, and historically significant events. Once again prior to any instruction taking place, a pre-test was given to all students. The scores of the five students sampled are shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12:



The scores on this last pretest were again lower than would be expected of an honors student, but the student's boastful comments cleared up any misunderstanding. They bragged about intentionally doing poorly on their pre-test in order to get the maximum 15 point improvement bonus added to their posttest scores. Some students turned in blank pretest sheets, others would say "Well, guess I failed that test" and laugh with their classmates. Others would fail the test, then respond to the same questions correctly when asked them in discussion. Needless to say, this researcher was disappointed in the student's lack of effort on these tests, but the data collected from these tests did provide some useful information. It seems that honors students are not interested in demonstrating what they know as much as they are in getting the grade. In their minds, the grade is all that matters, not the knowledge it is supposed to represent.

They will learn the information and retain it, but only seem willing to call upon that knowledge base when it will somehow benefit them; honors students are extrinsically motivated. Unless there is the "proverbial carrot" dangling in front of them, the teacher will likely experience the same frustrations this researcher has during this study.

Possible Causes of Problem

A teacher's worst nightmare is to look out into a sea of expressionless faces. When confronted with the dilemma, teachers have discovered that this type of student reaction may be caused by a pattern of academic failure. Among the many reasons for student failure, it appears to the researchers that these are significant: lack of intrinsic motivation, lack of clarity on the value/worth/meaning of traditional grading system, diminished self-esteem - defeatist attitude, and an inability to recognize their own growth.

The old fashioned ideal of learning for learning's sake is a lost concept amongst today's youth. Somewhere along the way, they have failed to appreciate the joy of conquering a tough quadratic equation or getting Chaucer's satiric humor. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the educational system has failed them.

In schools across America, teachers have been so indoctrinated to the importance of state goals, state tests, such as IGAP, and other standardized tests that there is very little opportunity for students to learn from their mistakes. They have learned that mistakes can be deadly. Mistakes are lethal to such things as their class rank, available scholarships, extra-curricular activities, but more importantly, mistakes can be fatal to a struggling student's self-esteem. Mager (1973) claims that "we don't care how hard the student tried, we don't care how close he got, if he can't perform he mustn't be certified as being able to perform" (p.90). It is little wonder students wouldn't want to expend much energy in an educational system that doesn't acknowledge their efforts. In their mind, they have already failed, so why bother trying.

In today's schools that use a traditional grading system, is an "A" given by different teachers really the same? For many students in classrooms across America, it is not. All instructors don't define grades the same way. This causes feelings of frustration and inferiority in some students. Berger (1991) goes as far as to say that grades are destructive for all kids. When the goal is unclear, it is extremely difficult to make the mark and maintain a high self-esteem.

"Students' well being depends on how good teacher assessments really are" (Stiggin, 1992, p.5). Children spend a large portion of their developmental years under the care of instructors. The opinions educators have of students shape the students' opinion of themselves as learners. Yet, more often than not, teachers evaluate students' performance with very little thought as to how the evaluation affects the child. Often this evaluation carries a negative connotation to the child. "This kind of chronic disappointment can translate into a general sense of diminished value and potential, where children's inner sense of adequacy is seriously compromised" (Gross, 1996/97, p.1). When this continues over time, it is little wonder students cannot be successful or recognize their success.

The success of a slow learner often goes unnoticed. Mac Iver and Reuman (1993/94) contend that "traditional assessment, grading and student recognition practices are partly responsible for the anti-academic norms and low level of student effort that pervade American schools" (p. 24). For example, in the eyes of most, a "D" is a "D". No one seems to acknowledge that the D student was able to correctly respond to 5 more questions on this test in comparison to their performance on the last test. It is improvement and should be praised. Too often this student's accomplishments are overlooked at the expense of a child's love for learning.

The love of learning sounds like an old fashioned ideal, but it is not. Instructors have difficult jobs, but this lofty goal should not be forgotten along the way. After all, it

seems educators' jobs would be easier if the students were intrinsically motivated, had a clear understanding of the grading criterion, felt good about themselves as learners and could clearly see their own success. Alternative Assessment is one practice that addresses these concerns.

List of Possible Solutions

Alternative Assessment strategies offer countless approaches that classroom teachers can utilize to improve students' performance. One of the techniques is the use of performance based assessments. Wiggins says that "Teachers ask them [students] to perform some work using a repertoire of knowledge and skills and being responsive to the particular task and the context at hand" (as cited by Huot 1996). He goes on to say, "by observing performance, teachers obtain a direct measure of what students have learned and what they are able to do with their knowledge." This technique is effective in improving students' grades in that all students can achieve success at something because they are now being asked to do a variety of activities that tap into their individual talents.

A second possible solution to the dilemma is portfolios. Murphy (1997) asserts that "portfolios can document meaningful ways that students read and write and think" (p.2). This educational strategy is very effective in improving student grades by allowing them to experience success by clearly showing their own growth with concrete evidence. A third solution that could be implemented would be open-ended or extended response exercises. Zimmerman (1993) claims that these types of questions "require students to explore a topic orally or in written form" (p.11). Student's grades could be improved because they are not only given choices, in the way they express their understanding, but they are also liberated by taking ownership of that knowledge.

E. Statement of Resolution

By implementing the pre and posttest, pre and post KWL charts, portfolios, PMI charts, and improvement rubrics, we expect students to improve their academic performance that consequently will create a more positive image of themselves as learners.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

The researchers investigated two questions related to alternative assessment: the effect of alternative assessment on student grade improvement and the effect of alternative assessment on student's recognizing their own growth and improvement. "Performance assessment, also known as alternative or authentic assessment, is a form of testing that requires students to perform a task rather than select an answer from a ready-made list." (Zimmermann, 1993, p.1)

The researchers' purpose in investigating these questions was two-fold. The researchers, in their experience have found that their students do not understand the meaning of the standardized grading system and that the grades have no significant meaning for their students. Liubinskas and Thomas' (1993) claim that "evaluation is integral to learning and growth. Evaluation allows one to step back and determine where one has gone and where one wants to go. Ideally, evaluation aids teachers in guiding students toward greater competency and autonomy. In reality, evaluation often thwarts its very purpose" (p.1-2). This research supports the idea that evaluation can be a tool for students to utilize in analyzing their self-improvement and growth. However, most students do not utilize self-evaluation to determine their progress due to the fact that standard grades are of little significance to them.

Consequently, methods of alternative assessment may allow students to improve their standard academic grades and through self-evaluation and reflection allow them to

realize their growth and self-improvement. Ornstein (1993) notes "teacher research and teacher evaluation … should attend to the feelings and attitudes of students, not just knowledge and skills, because feelings and attitudes determine what knowledge and skills the student will seek and acquire" (p.4). The use of alternative strategies may give students more positive attitudes about learning through collection, reflection, and self-evaluation and may lead them to become lifelong learners. Gross (1996/1997) contends that "the child defines himself as a learner through various means, including (1) how he experiences himself at mastering skills and absorbing information; (2) how others see him and let him know about himself and, (3) how he compares himself to others in terms of mastering a new skill,…" (p.1). Often students view themselves negatively in regards to the type of learner they perceive themselves to be. This is frequently a result of a student not mastering skills or not grasping things as quickly as his classmates. On the opposite end of the spectrum are those students who consistently catch on to things quickly and continuously receive positive reinforcement in the form of the standard letter grade of A. Both types of learners may benefit from alternative assessments by possibly becoming more aware of how they learn. Currently, the standardized grading system does not allow for the diverse capabilities of students or the fact that individuals learn at different rates.

"Constructivist approaches portray learners as active meaning makers who select, organize, connect, and otherwise make sense of new information and ideas on the basis of their prior knowledge." (Meltzer, L. and Kim D., 1994). The literature suggests that by using knowledge previously learned, the student will make connections to new ideas and will transfer their previous knowledge to real life situations. Rather than students

racing to see who will learn the material first, the constructivist theory allows students to feel ownership in their learning process.

Experience suggests that educators are concerned about finding a meaningful way to measure the ways in which students acquire knowledge. Wiggins' study (as cited in Stellwagen, 1997) "argued that educators should use multiple and varied assessment methods. Balanced assessment does not exclude the use of multiple-choice tests; it only restricts their use as the sole means of assessment." (p.4). This would indicate that alternative forms of assessment need to be developed and used in assessing what students have actually learned. Some recommendations from Lesh and Lamon (1992) include:

- New sources of documentation for achievement must be considered, including innovative new types of tests, but also students' project portfolios, teachers' classroom observations, one-to-one clinical interviews, and computer-based instructional activities.
- New types of response interpretation procedures must be developed; including those that go beyond assigning one-dimensional scores or letter grades to identify profiles of strengths and needs for individual students…
- New types of learning progress reports must be generated that are simple and yet not simplistic, and that: (i) integrate information from a variety of sources, (ii) focus on patterns and trends in data, and (iii) inform a variety of decision makers and decision-making issues...

(p. 10-11)

Research suggests that traditional forms of assessment have limited what has been taught and that higher order thinking skills have been neglected. Students who have done

well on tests in the past simply learned how to take tests well (Liubinskas, 1993). Conventional assessment practices have been annual, multiple-choice, and are based on a single setting. Likewise, they are norm-referenced and teacher-proof. On the other hand, new assessment practices are ongoing and cumulative. They use open-ended formats, draw on a variety of settings, and are theory-referenced. Alternative assessments are teacher-mediated and learner oriented (Chittenden, 1991).

Chittenden (1991) states that "we will surely see major changes in educational assessment during the coming decade, but such change will take many forms, many directions, and evolve out of considerable trial and error" (p.23 & 24). Research in alternative assessments is relatively new in education. No one alternative assessment method or succession of methods is tried and true. In Liubinskas' study (1993) no significant difference in student self-esteem was found between students who were evaluated traditionally and those who were evaluated with authentic assessment. Although, it was acknowledged that the sixteen and seventeen year olds involved in the study had already had twelve years of formal schooling and had been previously conditioned to standardized testing. Similarly, Maeroff (as cited in Liubinskas, 1993) found a lack of evidence that students who score low on traditional tests will score better with authentic measures (p.133).

Teachers, parents, and students are as yet uncomfortable with alternative assessments. "Performance assessments don't look familiar and they don't feel familiar" (Degracie, 1994, p.8). The researchers infer from the literature that teachers, students, and parents will have to become accustomed to other methods of evaluation instead of the

traditional method of A, B, C, etc. They will need to become active learners and self-evaluators.

One method that has been tried by Matyasec, in 1998, has been the system of portfolios. " 'Portfolio assessment' is a collection of work that reflects a student's abilities, accomplishments, and progress. This collection of work may have performances and these performances may be authentic. However, portfolios may also be collections of worksheets, tests, and independent work that are not performance-based or authentic. The best assignments in portfolios are often used to judge the overall quality of the student's work" (Johnsen, 1996, p.1). This method proved to be successful for Matyasec's students. Each week students would select work and write a reflection about why that particular piece had been selected. In the students' final evaluation of the portfolio project, the students unanimously felt the portfolios were an effective means of showing their growth and many stated this should be done each quarter for students to actually see their progress and improvement (Matyasec, 1998).

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of using alternative assessment tactics, during the first (1st) semester of the 1998/99 school year, the freshman honors' English class and the sixth (6^{th}) grade heterogeneous math class will improve their academic grades and sense of themselves as improving learners. Pre and posttests, pre and post KWL charts, portfolios, PMI charts and improvement rubrics will measure their growth.

The setting for this study was a high school freshman honors' English class and a middle school sixth (6^{th}) grade heterogeneous math class. The high school freshman class has 26 students and meets first period of the day on alternate days due to block

scheduling. The middle school class has twenty-two students and meets as a group with the researcher in the morning. For collecting their data, the researchers randomly selected five students from each class. The researchers collected data from these ten students during the first semester of the 1998/99 school year.

The first measurement used was a survey that recorded student perceptions of the meaning of grades and of themselves as learners. (See Appendix A). The responses were tabulated and grouped by category in two stem and leaf plot graphs and two circle graphs. (See Figure 1-6). The categories consist of the type of learners they perceive themselves to be, the learners' perception of their grade point average, the learners' understanding of the grade of A, and the learners' feeling when a failing grade is received.

A second indicator the researchers used was to administer a pre-test for each unit taught within the first semester. (See Appendix B, C, D, E, F, G). The subjects' results were recorded in a bar graph (See Figure 7-12) and subsequent instruction was based on the needs of the students.

The next method used was a KWL chart. (See Appendix H). The K in a KWL chart stands for prior knowledge or what the students know, the W symbolizes what the students want to learn, and the L stands for what they have learned. This chart was used as a gauge to show what the targeted students know about a specific topic and what the targeted students want to find out about a specific topic. The researcher from Forrester had all students fill out a personal KWL chart while completing the pre-test. The researcher from Southern had all students fill out a personal KWL chart after completing the pre-test. After completing the KWL, instruction was provided not only on the students' needs but also on what they want to know as well.

After covering the unit's objectives and evaluating students using alternative assessment techniques, the students were given a posttest on the unit. (See Appendix I, J, K, L, M, N). Bar graphs were also generated to show improvement or lack of improvement from the pre-test to the post test. (See Figure 13-18).

Upon completion of the posttest, the students were asked to finalize their KWL chart by indicating with a different color what they now know about the topic. The researchers addressed the results of the KWL charts in a narrative form.

At the start of the semester, the researcher from Forrester had the students create a personal portfolio. Students were asked to decorate the portfolio cover telling the researchers in a visual way something personal about themselves. Content of the portfolio was based on specific criteria. (See Appendix O). The researcher from Forrester also required students to write a reflection for each weekly assignment selected for the portfolio. (See Appendix P). In addition, students were asked to reflect on their overall growth from the pre KWL to the post KWL. The researcher from Southern had students complete a PMI chart for each unit, which describes what the student found to be positive, negative, or interesting about each unit. (See Appendix Q). Researchers narratively described their observations of the targeted students' portfolios and PMI charts.

A final performance assessment the researchers used was an improvement rubric. This rubric based the students' academic grade on the unit by giving bonus points when improvement was shown from pre to post test. (See Appendix R). The sampled students' scores and improvement gains are shown in Figures 13 through 18.

Project Action Plan

- Researchers will administer a survey at the beginning of the targeted semester period pertaining to student perceptions of the meaning of grades and of themselves as learners.
- For every unit researchers teach during the targeted semester period, they will:
  1. Administer a pre-test.
  2. Have all students fill out a KWL chart upon completion of or during the pre-test.
  3. Base their instruction on the results of the pre-tests and KWL charts.
  4. Administer a posttest upon completion of instruction of the unit.
  5. Have all students update their KWL chart upon completion of the posttest.
- The researcher from Forrester will, at the beginning of the targeted semester period, have all students create a portfolio which visually tells the viewer something about the students themselves.
- Researchers will have students select an assignment each week for their portfolio based on established criteria. (See Appendix O).
- Researchers will have students write a reflection piece for the assignment selected each week. (See Appendix P).
- The researcher from Southern will have the students complete a PMI chart at the completion of each unit. (See Appendix Q).
- Researchers will have students write a reflection piece commenting on the students' growth from the pre-test to the post KWL.
- Researchers will compute the students' academic grade using the improvement rubric to indicate students' advancement. (See Appendix R).

Methods of Assessment

Researchers will develop for each unit of study a pre- test and posttest covering the content, skills, and objectives for each unit. In addition, the researchers will develop a KWL graphic organizer worksheet. Portfolios of student work as described in the Project Action Plan will be kept for the duration of the semester. Student PMI charts as described in the Project Action Plan will be completed after each unit for the duration of the semester. Student checklists will be developed by the researchers to help the students stay organized.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Historical Description of Intervention

The objective of this project was to use alternative assessments to improve student achievement. The researchers proposed to use non-traditional assessments of a KWL graphic organizer, bonus points earned through improvement by students from their pre-test to their posttest scores, and self-evaluating portfolios to help foster student academic success. In addition, the researchers implemented traditional assessment techniques of a pre-test and posttest but put a new twist on these methods by allowing the students to earn improvement bonus points when evidence of learning was apparent from improved test scores.

The researchers targeted two separate populations of students in two different academic settings. Forrester Junior High School included those students from a sixth (6^{th}) grade heterogeneous math class while Southern High School students were from a tracked, freshman honors' class at the high school level. Five subjects from each class were randomly selected from each research site.

The researchers attempted to determine whether alternative assessments would give students an opportunity to want to improve their academic grade and that in giving this opportunity would ultimately motivate them to learn.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Immediate Problem: Forrester

The targeted students from Setting B were from a sixth (6^{th}) grade heterogeneous math class at Forrester Junior High School. As seen in Figure 1 four out of the five sixth (6^{th}) grade subjects that were studied at Forrester Junior High perceived themselves as either good or average learners and they characterized themselves as either 4.0(A) or 3.0(B) students. All four students agreed that receiving a letter grade of "A" meant that they studied really hard and earned a good grade. Interestingly, the student who characterized herself with a (1.0)F grade point average believed that if she did all her work, she should get an "A". She did not seem to grasp the idea that she needed to do quality work which would earn a good grade and that she would have to study hard in order to earn a 4.0(A) average. She seemed to feel that it was enough to simply complete her work without any regard as to its quality. A lack of self-evaluation was evident on the part of this particular student's response. The remaining students felt that if they receive a failing grade they will be disappointed but they would get over it. Only one of the subjects felt horrible and that life is coming to an end with a failing grade. This result reinforced that students do not value learning for learning's sake, but merely accept the traditional grade that they have earned and fail to evaluate themselves as learners. Moreover, the researcher confirmed that the students at Forrester were not too concerned about their academic progress

and self-growth. This researcher felt it would be quite a task to impress upon the students the value of self-evaluation and show them their self-growth. With this goal in mind, pre-tests were given so students would know what they still needed to learn.

The students at Forrester were given a pre-test at the beginning of each unit. (See Figure 2,3, and 4). Students were assured that this test was for the researcher alone to determine how best to proceed with instruction. Students were encouraged to do the best they could and not to become stressed over the pre-test as it would not count for a grade. The children were asked to complete their KWL chart as they worked on their pre-test. (See Appendix H). The researcher instructed them to write any math topic that they already knew in the "K" section of the KWL chart and to write any questions they had on the unit in the "W" column of the KWL chart.

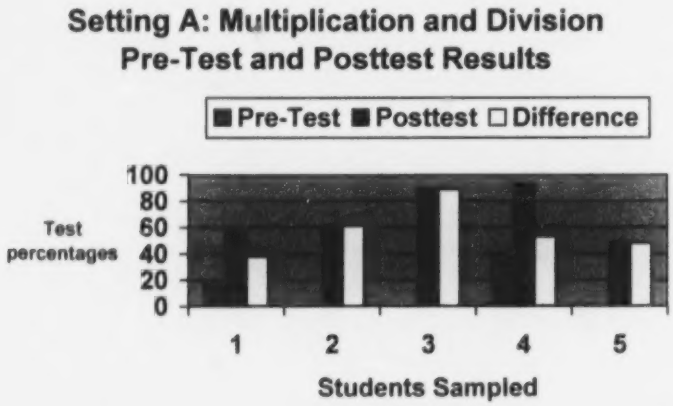
Students showed very little prior knowledge as determined by their pre-test data. (See Figure 2,3, and 4). The pre-test scores generally fell between the 0% and 40% range. The researcher was faced with the dilemma of knowing that some topics on the pre-test had been previously taught to the students in the lower grades but the students showed little or no recall of any topics previously taught. Although this knowledge would be a catalyst for future instruction, the researcher feared that the spiraling sequence of math topics and the students' lack of recall of basic skills would prove to be a detriment to their posttest scores. The evidence of the pre-test scores indicated that the students would have to make significant

gains on the posttest to show mastery of topics previously taught and to show mastery of the new topics introduced.

The results of the pre-test and posttests indicate that the researcher's fears were confirmed. (See Figure 13, 14, and 15). The posttest results indicate that the students did indeed learn but that mastery was not achieved for all of the students. A unit was considered to have been mastered by an indicated test score of 85% or higher on a given posttest.

Figure 13 represents the scores that the sixth (6^{th}) grade math students at Forrester Junior High earned on their pre-test and posttest on the multiplication and division of decimal unit. The figure also shows the gains the students made from the pre-test to the posttest. These gains are not indicative of improvement points, but rather to give a picture that learning has taken place.

Figure 13:

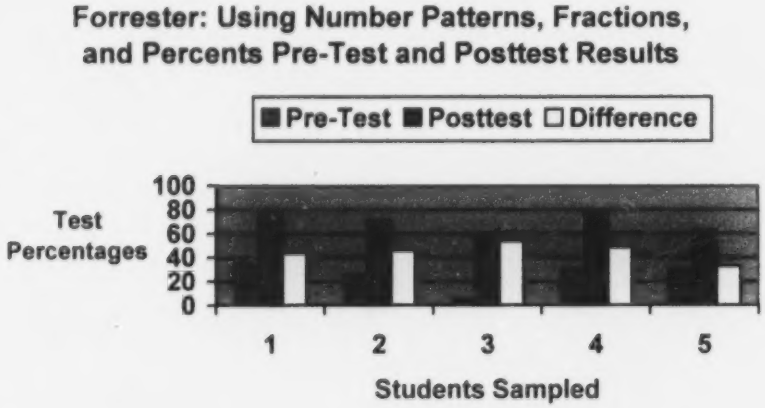


As is evident in Figure 13, all five students improved their scores dramatically. Only two of the targeted students, however, showed mastery with scores of eighty-nine percent (89%) and ninety-three percent (93%). The three

remaining subjects' scores indicate that learning had taken place but that the scores of forty-eight percent (48%), fifty-eight percent (58%), and sixty-one percent (61%) did not meet the mastery goal of eighty-five percent (85%). Considering that subjects 2, 3, and 5 had pre-test results of zero percent (0%), these subjects showed admirable gains, but subject 2 and 5 indicate that re-teaching is necessary in order for them to achieve mastery.

Figure 14 is representative of the pre and posttest scores along with the gains that the sixth (6^{th}) grade students at Forrester Junior High made on the math unit on number patterns, fractions, and percents. All five of the sampled students have made improvement gains to earn bonus points which will help them improve their final quarter grade. The grades depicted in Figure 14 are representative of their actual scores on their posttest and do not reflect any improvement points.

Figure 14:

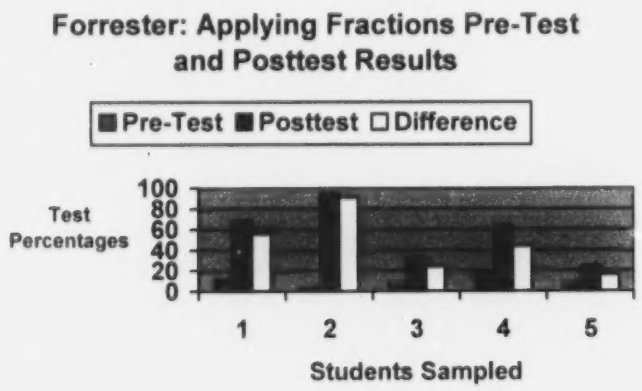


The results shown in Figure 14 showed good improvement on the part of all of the students. Four of the five students have a passing grade of seventy-nine percent (79%), seventy-one percent (71%), seventy-nine percent (79%), and sixty-

three percent (63%), while only one student failed with a score of fifty-nine percent (59%). Once again, the students have shown that learning has taken place since the beginning pre-test but that mastery was not attained by any of the five subjects.

The final unit tested at Forrester Junior High at the sixth (6^{th}) grade level was on the application of fractions with all four basic math operations of adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing. In Figure 15, the results of the pre-test and posttest scores are pictured along with the gains that were made by the students from pre-test to posttest. Once again the students made gains and earned improvement points. (See Appendix R). The gains shown in the figure are not as significant as in the previous two units and once again are not indicative of the actual improvement points earned to improve the students' quarter grade, but merely show that learning has indeed taken place.

Figure 15



As is evident in Figure 15, these results were the most disheartening for the researcher at Forrester Junior High. Once again the students showed improvement from pre to posttest but the gains were not as dramatic as the previous two units had been. While one student with a score of ninety-five percent (95%) showed that she had achieved mastery, her classmates' scores of sixty-eight percent (68%), thirty-two percent (32%), sixty-four percent (64%), and twenty-four percent (24%) indicates to the researcher that the majority of topics in this unit must be re-taught and re-tested. The researcher possibly attributes these low scores to the fact that the four operations of fractions were tested in this unit. The students had very little prior knowledge as indicated by their pre-test scores (See Figure 10) and with little to build on, the students became confused with the various rules that apply themselves to the operations of fractions.

The instructional technique that the researchers used in tracking pre-test to posttest scores and calculating the improvement difference has proved invaluable. The feedback given to the researchers through this method has assured the researchers that learning has taken place for the students. Results indicated whether students are mastering the material presented. The findings have also helped to determine whether the material should be presented differently in the future, and whether any topics should be re-taught to the students. The researcher would recommend that for future instruction this particular chapter be broken into two parts and each part be tested separately.

The researcher discovered that topics previously taught in lower grades were reinforced during instruction and these topics showed mastery. However, the newer topics presented proved to be difficult for some of the targeted students and possibly not enough repetition had been done for the students to have mastered the newly introduced topics. It was apparent that the researcher would have to do re-teaching and re-testing before the students' scores would show that they had mastered the units' topics. This discovery on the part of the researcher reinforces the theory that building on previous knowledge is the key to acquiring additional knowledge and in learning how to problem solve.

The KWL charts that students filled in while they were taking their pre-test indicated that they had little prior knowledge and that they had many questions about the material on which they were being tested. (See Appendix H). The "K" column was often left blank or the students wrote that they knew nothing about the topics being tested on the pre-test. After taking the posttest, students communicated that they had learned many topics since the beginning pre-test. However, students did not always write specifically about what they had learned from the pre-test to the posttest. Oftentimes the students would write that they had learned many things. It took several months for the students to write specifically and in detail about what they had learned. The researcher often heard complaints that the students hated to write and that they shouldn't have to write so much in a math class. Another observation made by the researcher was that the students did not always match what they had wanted to learn with what they did learn. The researcher feels that this could possibly be an oversight of sixth grade

students not wanting to write or possibly that there were some topics that the students wanted to learn, but felt that they had not learned. This latter possibility would go along with the results of the posttest scores that failed to indicate mastery on the part of selected students.

Students were able to achieve improvement bonus points if their posttest scores had improved from their pre-test scores. (See Appendix R). All five subjects earned improvement points each time that they took a posttest. Each child beat their base score by more than 10 points and thus earned 15 improvement bonus points. These points were accumulated and used to improve their quarter grade by one letter grade. In all cases, their quarter grade went up by one letter grade. For example, if a student had averaged a C for a quarter grade it was improved to a C+ on their actual report card. Rather than inflating the students' grades to indicate mastery, the researcher graded the students on their improvement from their pre-tests to their posttests, thereby recognizing that the students are working hard to attain achievement. This researcher recognizes that it takes many baby steps before a person can run. Moreover, it is clear that all children can learn but some learn at a slower rate than others. Rather than penalizing a student for not learning as fast as his classmates, the researcher used the improvement points to give the learner an incentive to learn and to achieve, which then enables the learner to build on prior knowledge. As is evident in the gains shown in Figures 13, 14, and 15 this technique proved to be advantageous for the sixth (6^{th}) grade students at Forrester Junior High School.

Finally, students kept portfolios, which they made a selection for each week. (See Appendix O). Along with their selection, they wrote a reflection indicating why they had chosen that particular piece. (See Appendix P). The introduction of portfolios to a math class proved to be very difficult. Students were at first confused as to how to select a piece for their portfolios and they definitely balked at the idea of more writing in a math class. As time went on the students became more comfortable with this assessment and their reflections began to show more detail and self-evaluation. Students were also given points for a completed portfolio. The only criteria the researcher used for maximum points were that all selections and reflections chosen during the quarter were accumulated in the final portfolio that was submitted to the researcher. Students were not assessed by the researcher on their writing skills or their reasons for selection, as the researcher wanted the students to learn to self-evaluate themselves. The students were told that these points would be averaged into their final grade as a test score.

A portfolio checklist (See Appendix S) had been given to each student at the beginning of the quarter to track how many selections and how many reflection entries should be in their portfolio at the quarter's end and the students were teacher-evaluated by the completeness of their portfolio. In three out of five cases, the students earned a full 100 points and indicated a complete portfolio. Whereas two of the students were missing one selection and one reflection, thereby earning 90 points out of 100. These points were computed into their final

grade as a test score. In all five cases, this evaluation improved their overall quarter grade.

The subjects studied had a variety of reasons for selecting a piece and these reasons ranged from it was their best paper to the fact that they had improved or felt that they still needed to improve more. The students included comments in their reflections that indicated self-evaluation such as "I bombed on both tests but I improved to a 58%. I need to improve on taking away my zeroes" and "On my pre-test I got an F. On my posttest I got an A-. I improved by three letter grades and that's a huge improvement". The student with the original learner perspective survey of a 1.0 (F) grade point average and having the impression that if she did all her work she should get an "A" had brief but self-evaluating reflections which indicated self-growth for her. Some of her reflections include "I got a pretty good grade but I need to study more" and "I picked this paper because I just want to pick it because I have a good grade on it". As time went on this student began to analyze her work more diligently showing quality in the work she completed. Although, she continued to have difficulty with math, communicating what she needed to improve on seemed to help her focus on actually improving.

The portfolios provided the researcher with information about what the students were feeling about their work and themselves as learners. It proved invaluable for guiding how the researcher taught future topics and helped the researcher acknowledge that learning was taking place although not at the mastery level the researcher was striving towards for all of the students. The portfolios

were sent home each quarter with the students' report cards. The researcher had conferenced with each student about what the student was doing well in, what the student was making progress in, what the student's goals for next quarter were, and what the student needed to work on with the teacher. This feedback to the students seemed to increase the students' motivation to learn and ask questions.

Immediate Problem: Southern

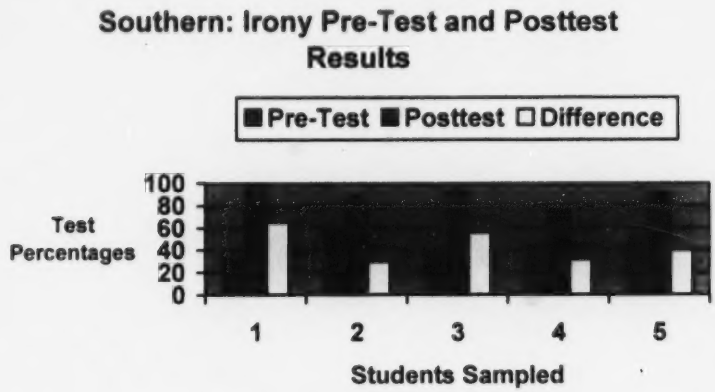
The freshman 9 Honors students at Southern High School were the subjects for research setting B. Five students were randomly selected to become research subjects from the class at large. At the beginning of the 1998 school year, the five students took a survey along with the rest of the class that was designed to uncover their views of themselves as a learner (See Figure 5.) An overwhelming 80% of the sample described themselves as "A" students, while the remaining student characterized himself as a "B" student. All five of the student subjects demonstrated a very high opinion of their abilities in that they believed that the grades they received reflected their own efforts as opposed to having an easy teacher (See Figure 4). Moreover, 3 of the 5 students reported having an overall grade point average of 4.0. The other two participants claimed to maintain a 3.0 GPA. In spite of their positive view of their grade point averages, the freshman honors English students took a failing grade very seriously. Three out of the five students perceived a failing grade as "horrible –like their life was coming to an end". Only two of the honors students had a realistic view of a failing grade and felt that a failing grade was disappointing but that they would recover from it. (See Figure 6). The survey provided a rare glimpse into students' perceptions of

their own learning. Their responses reaffirmed a long-standing belief that honors students are high achievers and motivated to do well, despite the results of their pre-test. Pre-tests were administered to the 5 participants and their classes prior to studying an irony, mythology, and Shakespearean unit. (See Figure 16, 17, and 18). It was explained to students that they were not to become distressed over taking a "test" they were not prepared for due to the fact that it was simply a measure of their prior understanding of the subject matter. Many students questioned why they had to take a test if it didn't count. This researcher now recognizes these comments were the first signs of the students' future manipulative actions. The pretest scores would later be compared to their post test results at which time improvement points (or bonus points) would be rewarded to their unit exam based on the amount of growth demonstrated. In hindsight, the researcher's forthright manner may have compromised the results of the study. These honors' students heard "bonus points" and purposely failed the pretest in order to get the maximum improvement points. The irony unit pretest results for student subjects A-E were 32%, 58%, 37%, 44% and 51% respectively (Figure 10). The second unit's results were 23%, 45%, 63%, 18% and 36% (Figure 11). Shakespeare background information was the last unit tested with similarly daunting results: 61%, 35%, 46%, 43%, and 22%. (See Figure 12). Even more disheartening was to hear students celebrate and amuse themselves with these low scores. They were secure in the knowledge that they had the ability to do better which, of course, they did on the units' posttest! The posttest results on these

same units, which were administered after extensive study, were more typical of what is expected of an honors student.

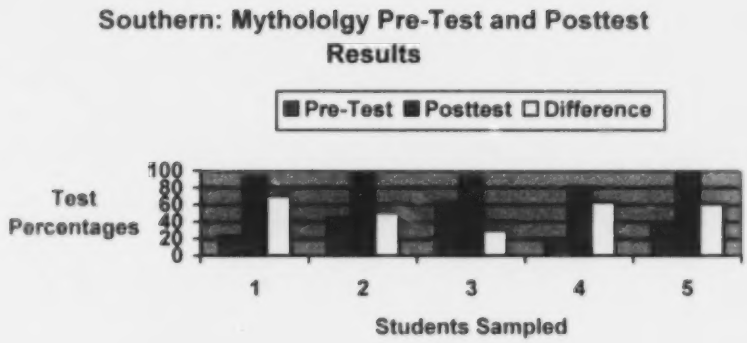
On the irony posttest, the student subjects A-E scored 97%, 88%, 93%, 76% and 91% respectively (See Figure 16). This marked an average improvement of 36 points from pre to posttest!

Figure 16:



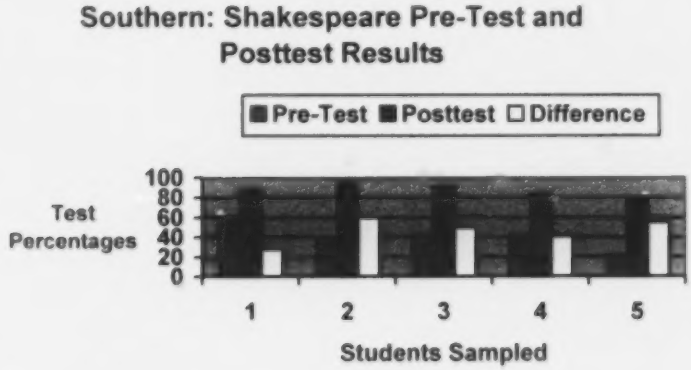
Scores were also high on the mythology posttest. These scores for students A-E were 93, 96%, 93%, 81%, and 97%. Again a marked improvement in test scores. (See Figure 17).

Figure 17:



The growth from pre to posttest results for the Shakespeare background note unit was equally impressive: 89%, 95%, 92%, 84% and 77%. (See Figure 18).

Figure 18:



Consequently, all student participants in this study received the maximum improvement points of 15 bonus points on each unit of study. Unfortunately, the students' motives left much to be desired. Although, their ulterior motives were not appreciated, learning was evident. The research subjects' learning was

demonstrated through their KWL chart responses and daily PMI reflections. (See Appendix H and Q). The KWL charts were given to students prior to their pretest so they could record their previous knowledge base as well as what they hoped to learn. Their responses in the "K" and "W" columns confirmed my earlier assertion that the students did in fact know more than their pretest reflected. They were not only able to intelligently discuss details of each units' content prior to instruction, but were able in most cases to inquire about specific issues they wanted to learn. Once these two columns were filled out, the charts were collected, then redistributed after instruction and assessment to be completed. They were asked to record what they had learned in the "L" column of the chart. Without exception, all students were able to recall exact terminology, actually explain how and why an element was used and provide logical rationale for their assertions. Learning had clearly taken place, and judging from their PMI chart responses was a relatively enjoyable experience. PMI charts were used in the Southern research setting in place of weekly portfolios. This change was made in light of the differences in the age, discipline and teaching styles from Forrester. The responses in the "P" column on these charts became a log of daily classroom activities. The "M" column listed complaints such as too much homework. The "I" column provided the most enlightening of the three. Students reflected on specific concepts or activities they found unique. Some of the comments were " I didn't know there were 3 types of irony" and "It doesn't seem right that Uranus and Gaea came out of nothingness" or " Why didn't one of the other gods help save Prometheus from Zeus' never ending punishment?" Although these charts

were used in place of a portfolio reflection, they do reflect the students' feelings on what is working, or not working, for them as learners. As the students became more accustomed to using the charts, they began to recognize their own learning through self-reflection.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers proposed to use alternative assessments as a means of improving student achievement. The researchers used a pre and posttest as a traditional means of assessment along with the alternative assessments of the KWL graphic organizer, portfolios, PMI charts, and an improvement rubric. The use of pre and posttests along with a KWL chart is a sound instructional practice. The KWL assists teachers in determining prior knowledge of their students and helps them develop appropriate lesson plans based on what their students still need to learn. The researcher at Forrester found that the students had little or no prior knowledge even on topics the researcher knew had been taught in lower grades which prompted the researcher to provide review each day as a sponge activity before teaching the lesson. The researcher at Southern discovered that the students had a general idea of a topic but needed to learn more specifics about each topic. The researcher at Southern developed lesson plans, which included details and a fuller understanding of the topic being taught. Finally, the KWL allowed the teachers to determine what the students felt they had learned from the presented material and indicated to the researchers that learning was taking place. At Forrester, the researcher discovered that some of the questions that the students had before the lesson was taught still remained after the posttest was given which

allowed for re-teaching and re-testing. The researcher at Southern had affirmation that the Honors' students were learning at the level that might be expected of them.

These researchers have found that using improvement points was most beneficial to the students at Forrester when the points were used to improve the students' quarter report card grade. These students seemed more motivated to learn; knowing that it was more important for them to improve and that by improving could ultimately improve their final course grade. However, given the age of the students at Forrester, the researcher recommends that bonus points be computed on each individual posttest grade, which gives more immediate feedback to this less mature student. In doing this on each posttest, the students will see immediate positive results for their learning instead of waiting for an entire quarter to end. At Southern, the researcher was disappointed and frustrated with the deviousness of the students regarding the bonus improvement points. The researcher from Southern used the points solely as bonus points on each individual grade. The students at Southern manipulated the results of their pre-tests by purposely answering things incorrectly to achieve a low score. In doing this, they were assured that they would earn the maximum bonus points on their posttest. These students being tracked in an Honors' class had no incentive to improve since they were already high achieving and only used improvement points to attain an exceptionally high posttest grade. This result followed the researcher from Southern's premise that Honors students are motivated more by a high academic grade than by the pursuit of knowledge. The researcher for

Southern would recommend using the improvement points as an incentive for an improved quarter grade instead of bonus points added to each individual grade. Using the improvement rubric in this manner might challenge these high achieving students to learn for the sake of learning.

Both researchers used a tournament-style review technique to finally prepare students for the posttest which appeared to help students overall on their posttest scores. However, the researcher from Forrester found that her students did not internalize what they had missed during the tournament enough to go back and review when preparing for the test at home. The researcher from Southern recommends that a copy and answer sheet from the tournament game be distributed to the students after the tournament for use as a student study guide. The researcher from Forrester concurs with this recommendation.

There was definitive evidence from the students' portfolio reflections that students were using self-evaluation practices and that they were focusing on self-improvement. The researchers recommend that portfolios be used as a means to evaluate students as it indicates growth and academic progress for the students. The researchers also recommend conferencing with each student individually about their portfolio selections, their goals for improvement, and discussing with the student where the student might need additional assistance. The portfolio feedback provided the researcher at Forrester with much information that a plain letter grade or grade point average does not portray. It gave the researcher indicators about how the students were feeling, whether the students felt they were learning or not, and what the students themselves knew they must improve

within themselves as learners. It also assured the researcher that the students were learning although their scores often did not show evidence of mastery. The PMI charts that were used at Southern yielded similar results.

Students were asked to complete a PMI chart (See Appendix Q) daily to record one thing they thought was positive or that they had learned that day, one thing they thought was a minus or that they still had questions about, and one thing they thought was interesting or that they enjoyed doing in class. This chart was used in place of the portfolio reflections done at the end of a unit of study. The chart also served to record students daily opinions of the learning they had just experienced. The student's PMI reflections clearly communicated that learning had indeed taken place for these honors students. They were able to recall specific facts of the lessons, ask probing questions and enthusiastically discuss classroom activities that helped them retain information. Judging from their PMI responses, learning was evident. Moreover, contrary to initial impressions, these honors students not only mastered the content, but made significant connections between ideas and were able to transfer their new knowledge to other areas. At first glance, they appear to only care about "getting the grade", but upon closer inspection real learning took place.

The researchers at Forrester Junior High School and at Southern High School have reached the conclusion that their hypothesis about student achievement has been proved. The student sample that was used at Forrester indicated that students were not recognizing their academic progress but through the help of pre-tests, posttests, and reflecting on their improvement from one to

the other helped the students see that they were really learning. Accumulating work in a portfolio also helped the students see their strengths and weaknesses. Finally, using the bonus points as an incentive to learn seemed to help the students strive for success, which of course translated into solid learning.

The researcher at Southern affirmed the original hypothesis that high achievers tend to perform for the academic grade alone, but was pleasantly surprised to find that her students were self-evaluating themselves through the use of the PMI. Another benefit this researcher discovered in using the PMI was that she was able to guide her teaching to meet the needs of her students.

Overall, the researchers agree that the use of pre and posttests allow a teacher to see that students are learning and improving. The researchers recommend the use of portfolios and PMI charts to allow the students to self-evaluate their progress but also to allow an instructor to see the progress a student is making. Finally, the use of bonus improvement points is a good incentive for children to learn and want to improve themselves. The researchers have found that all of their intervention strategies to improve student achievement have proved to be sound instructional practices.

Appendix A

- Student Perspective Survey

Appendix A

- Student Perspective Survey

1. I am a _____ learner/student.

a. Good b. Average c. Poor

2. My grade point average is _____.

a. 4.0(A) b. 3.0(B) c. 2.0(C) d. 1.0(D) e. 0.0(F)

3. To me an "A" means _____.

a. I know everything and don't need to be in this class.

b. I studied really hard and earned a good grade.

c. That I really don't need to work hard like everybody says because the teacher will curve the test anyway.

d. I was just lucky to get this teacher because they grade easy.

e. I did all my work, so I should get an A.

4. When I get a failing grade, I feel _____.

a. Horrible-my life is coming to an end.

b. Bad-disappointed, but I'll get over it.

c. Nothing-I don't care about school.

d. Happy-I really showed them that they can't tell me what to do.

Appendix B

- Multiplication and Division of Decimal Pre-test

Name _____ Date _____ Appendix B

2 Chapter 2 Test, Form 1A

1. Which symbol makes 1.5709 ● 1.571 a true sentence? 1. _____
   A. < B. >
   C. = D. None of the above

2. Order 0.8, 0.7, 0.78, and 0.87 from least to greatest. 2. _____
   A. 0.7, 0.8, 0.78, 0.87 B. 0.7, 0.78, 0.8, 0.87
   C. 0.78, 0.87, 0.8, 0.7 D. 0.7, 0.87, 0.8, 0.78

Round each number to the underlined place-value position.

3. 8,205.6 3. _____
   A. 8,200 B. 8,205 C. 8,206 D. 8,210

4. 0.9519 4. _____
   A. 0.9 B. 0.95 C. 0.952 D. 1.0

Estimate by rounding.

5. 16.42 − 9.75 5. _____
   A. 5 B. 6 C. 7 D. 8

6. 4.87 × 49.7 6. _____
   A. 20 B. 25 C. 200 D. 250

7. $2.4\overline{)0.84}$ 7. _____
   A. 0.3 B. 0.4 C. 0.5 D. 0.6

8. Estimate 425 + 421.7 + 426 + 424.9 by clustering. 8. _____
   A. 1,500 B. 1,700 C. 1,800 D. 2,000

Multiply or divide.

9. 4.6 × 0.24 9. _____
   A. 1 B. 1.104 C. 11.04 D. 110.4

10. 0.032 × 23 10. _____
   A. 0.736 B. 7.36 C. 73.6 D. 736

11. $10^4 \times 0.0793$ 11. _____
   A. 0.0008 B. 793 C. 7,930 D. 79,300

12. 0.001 × 0.035 12. _____
   A. 0.000035 B. 0.0035 C. 3.5 D. 35

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2 Chapter 2 Test, Form 1A (continued)

Multiply or divide.

13. $0.048 \div 0.8$ — 13. _____
A. 0.05 B. 0.06 C. 0.6 D. 6

14. $0.038\overline{)0.456}$ — 14. _____
A. 12 B. 13 C. 15 D. 21

15. $0.021\overline{)0.357}$ — 15. _____
A. 0.059 B. 9 C. 17 D. 0.007

16. $0.009\overline{)0.378}$ — 16. _____
A. 34 B. 0.024 C. 21 D. 42

17. Express $\frac{59}{11}$ as a decimal. — 17. _____
A. 6.49 B. $0.1\overline{9}$ C. $5.\overline{36}$ D. 5.2

18. Write 0.71313... using bar notation. — 18. _____
A. $0.7\overline{13}$ B. $0.\overline{713}$ C. $7.\overline{13}$ D. 7.131

19. Express $\frac{15}{16}$ as a decimal. — 19. _____
A. 0.093 B. 0.9375 C. 93.75 D. 9.3

20. Complete: 0.75L = ? mL. — 20. _____
A. 7.5 B. 75 C. 750 D. 7,500

21. Complete: 7,462 g = ? kg. — 21. _____
A. 7.462 B. 0.7462 C. 74.62 D. 746.2

22. Write 498,000 in scientific notation. — 22. _____
A. 0.498×10^6 B. 4.98×10^5
C. 4.98×10^6 D. 49.8×10^4

23. Write 20,400 in scientific notation. — 23. _____
A. 0.204×10^6 B. 2.04×10^4
C. 2.04×10^6 D. 20.4×10^4

24. The trail up to the top of Pike's Peak is about 23 miles long. The Kalman family drove about three quarters of the way. About how many more miles must they drive to reach the top? — 24. _____
A. 4 B. 14 C. 8 D. 6

25. A beaker contains 625 milliliters of water. A chemist pours 0.25 liter of the water into a solution. How many milliliters are left in the beaker? — 25. _____
A. 250 B. 600 C. 375 D. 2,500

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Appendix C

- Chapter 4 Pre-test – Using Number Patterns, Fractions, and Percents

Name _____ Date _____

4 Chapter 4 Test, Form 1A

1. By which number is 9,709 divisible? 1. _____
   A. 9 B. 8 C. 7 D. 6

2. By which number is 60,070 *not* divisible? 2. _____
   A. 5 B. 2 C. 10 D. 6

3. Find the prime factorization of 182. 3. _____
   A. $2 \cdot 91$ B. $14 \cdot 17$ C. $2 \cdot 7 \cdot 13$ D. $13 \cdot 14$

4. Find the prime factorization of 550. 4. _____
   A. $3 \cdot 5 \cdot 19$ B. $2 \cdot 7 \cdot 17$ C. $5 \cdot 110$ D. $2 \cdot 5 \cdot 5 \cdot 11$

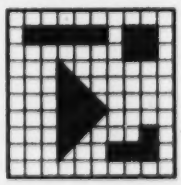
5. Find the next two terms in the sequence 65, 62, 57, 50, 41, 30, ... 5. _____
   A. 17, 2 B. 19, 4 C. 16, 1 D. 16, 3

6. Find the sixth term in the sequence 4, 8, 12, 16, ... 6. _____
   A. 26 B. 24 C. 23 D. 25

7. Find the GCF of 8, 20, and 36. 7. _____
   A. 2 B. 4 C. 6 D. 8

8. Find the GCF of 16, 56, and 64. 8. _____
   A. 8 B. 16 C. 4 D. 2

9. Write a percent to represent the shaded area. 9. _____



   A. 12% B. 24% C. 9% D. 22%

10. Express $\frac{32}{72}$ in simplest form. 10. _____
    A. $\frac{16}{36}$ B. $\frac{8}{18}$ C. $\frac{4}{9}$ D. $\frac{1}{2}$

11. Express the ratio 12 yards to 8 feet in simplest form. 11. _____
    A. 12:8 B. 3:2 C. 1:2 D. 9:2

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4 Chapter 4 Test, Form 1A (continued)

12. Express 0.82 as a fraction in simplest form. 12. _____
A. $\frac{41}{50}$ B. $\frac{4}{5}$ C. $\frac{2}{5}$ D. $\frac{8}{10}$

13. Express $\frac{7}{16}$ as a percent. 13. _____
A. 0.4375% B. 437.5% C. 4.375% D. 43.75%

14. Express 12% as a fraction in simplest form. 14. _____
A. $\frac{1}{12}$ B. $\frac{12}{100}$ C. $\frac{3}{25}$ D. $\frac{6}{50}$

15. Find the LCM of 17, 27, and 37. 15. _____
A. 4,590 B. 16,983 C. 5,661 D. 1,887

16. Find the LCD for $\frac{11}{7}$ and $\frac{3}{8}$. 16. _____
A. 66 B. 56 C. 33 D. 18

Replace each ● to make a true sentence.

17. $\frac{7}{15}$ ● $\frac{13}{24}$ 17. _____
A. > B. < C. = D. +

18. $\frac{7}{11}$ ● $\frac{3}{5}$ 18. _____
A. > B. < C. = D. +

19. Shaniqua decided to deposit her baby-sitting money into a savings account to save for a mountain bike. In September, she deposited $75. Each month after that she deposited $35. How many months did it take for her to save up $285 in deposits? 19. _____
A. 5 B. 6 C. 8 D. 9

20. A box of chocolates contains 3 caramel-filled, 4 cherry-filled, 2 coconut-filled, 5 maple cream-filled, 6 milk chocolates, and 5 dark chocolates. What is the probability of picking a chocolate with *no* filling? 20. _____
A. $\frac{11}{25}$ B. $\frac{11}{20}$ C. $\frac{2}{5}$ D. $\frac{3}{5}$

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Appendix D

- Chapter 7 Pre-test – Applying Fractions

7

Name _____ Date __ Appendix D

Chapter 7 Test, Form 1A

Round to the nearest whole number.

1. $1\frac{2}{9}$ — 1. _____
   A. 0 B. 1 C. 2 D. $1\frac{1}{3}$

2. $3\frac{7}{8}$ — 2. _____
   A. 4 B. 3 C. $3\frac{1}{2}$ D. $4\frac{1}{2}$

Estimate.

3. $8\frac{13}{16} - 5\frac{1}{3}$ — 3. _____
   A. 3 B. 4 C. 5 D. 2

4. $12\frac{2}{5} \div 3\frac{1}{8}$ — 4. _____
   A. 4 B. 3 C. 5 D. 2

Add or subtract. Write each sum or difference in simplest form.

5. $\frac{1}{6} + \frac{7}{9}$ — 5. _____
   A. $\frac{7}{15}$ B. $\frac{8}{15}$ C. $1\frac{1}{18}$ D. $\frac{17}{18}$

6. $\frac{6}{7} - \frac{3}{4}$ — 6. _____
   A. 1 B. $\frac{3}{11}$ C. $\frac{3}{28}$ D. $\frac{8}{7}$

7. $11\frac{2}{7} - 8\frac{3}{8}$ — 7. _____
   A. $3\frac{51}{56}$ B. $2\frac{51}{56}$ C. $2\frac{37}{56}$ D. $3\frac{1}{56}$

8. $3\frac{5}{9} + 2\frac{6}{7}$ — 8. _____
   A. $5\frac{19}{63}$ B. $6\frac{19}{63}$ C. $6\frac{26}{63}$ D. $5\frac{11}{16}$

9. Rosa bought a container of peanuts. She gave $\frac{1}{4}$ of it to one sister, $\frac{1}{3}$ to another sister, $\frac{1}{6}$ to her brother, and kept the rest for herself. How much did she keep? — 9. _____
   A. $\frac{1}{2}$ B. $\frac{1}{8}$ C. $\frac{3}{4}$ D. $\frac{1}{4}$

Multiply. Write each product in simplest form.

10. $\frac{3}{12} \times \frac{4}{21}$ — 10. _____
    A. $\frac{1}{3}$ B. $\frac{12}{252}$ C. $\frac{7}{12}$ D. $\frac{1}{21}$

11. $7\frac{1}{5} \times \frac{5}{6}$ — 11. _____
    A. 6 B. $\frac{35}{30}$ C. $\frac{7}{6}$ D. $\frac{1}{6}$

Solve each equation. Write the solution in simplest form.

12. $I = 3\frac{8}{9} \times 2\frac{1}{7}$ — 12. _____
    A. $6\frac{8}{27}$ B. $8\frac{1}{3}$ C. $6\frac{2}{63}$ D. $\frac{75}{9}$

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7 Chapter 7 Test, Form 1A (continued)

Solve each equation. Write the solution in simplest form.

13. $1\frac{2}{3} \times 3\frac{7}{8} = t$ 13. _____
A. $4\frac{7}{12}$ B. $4\frac{11}{24}$ C. $6\frac{11}{24}$ D. $3\frac{9}{11}$

14. $m = 2\frac{7}{9} \times 4\frac{1}{8}$ 14. _____
A. $11\frac{33}{72}$ B. $8\frac{7}{72}$ C. $6\frac{65}{72}$ D. $11\frac{11}{24}$

Complete.

15. 3 qt = ? oz 15. _____
A. 6 B. 12 C. 96 D. 32

16. 6 c = ? gal 16. _____
A. 3 B. $1\frac{1}{2}$ C. 24 D. $\frac{3}{8}$

Name the property shown by each statement.

17. $\frac{4}{7} \times \frac{3}{5} = \frac{3}{5} \times \frac{4}{7}$ 17. _____
A. commutative B. associative
C. identity D. multiplicative inverse

18. $\frac{8}{9} \times \frac{9}{8} = 1$ 18. _____
A. commutative B. associative
C. identity D. multiplicative inverse

Solve each equation. Write the solution in simplest form.

19. $8 \times 1\frac{3}{4} = j$ 19. _____
A. 14 B. $9\frac{3}{4}$ C. $30\frac{2}{3}$ D. 6

20. $24 = \frac{h}{6}$ 20. _____
A. 4 B. 30 C. 144 D. 18

21. $2\frac{1}{4} \div 3\frac{3}{5} = s$ 21. _____
A. $\frac{5}{8}$ B. $8\frac{1}{10}$ C. $3\frac{17}{20}$ D. $\frac{35}{44}$

22. $w = 7\frac{3}{4} \div \frac{1}{2}$ 22. _____
A. $96\frac{7}{8}$ B. $15\frac{1}{2}$ C. $7\frac{3}{4}$ D. $8\frac{1}{4}$

23. $l = 9\frac{1}{2} \div \frac{3}{4}$ 23. _____
A. 19 B. $10\frac{1}{4}$ C. $7\frac{1}{8}$ D. $12\frac{2}{3}$

24. If each side of an eight-sided STOP sign measures about $12\frac{13}{16}$ inches, what is its perimeter to the nearest foot? 24. _____
A. 7 ft B. 6 ft C. 10 ft D. 9 ft

25. Find the circumference of a circle whose diameter is $\frac{5}{9}$ yard. Round to the nearest tenth. 25. _____
A. 2 yd B. 3.5 yd C. 1.7 yd D. 4 yd

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Appendix E

- Irony Pre-test

RESPONDING TO IRONY

A. Irony is essentially a contrast—between words and meaning, appearance and reality, expectation and actuality. Tell the points of contrast in each of the following. Identify the type of irony, verbal, situational, or dramatic.

1. A woman prepares for an argument with her husband about their son's visit to the circus. Instead the discussion leads to pleasant recollections of youth for both wife and husband.

2. (The narrator is leading a man into a cellar where he plans to kill him.)

Passage 8 from "The Cask of Amontillado," Edgar Allan Poe

"Come," I said, with decision, "we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved. . . ."

3.

Passage 9 from "The Woman Who Had No Prejudices," Anton Chekhov

"And this wondrous, superhuman, ox-like strength turned into nothing at all—was like a mere crushed rat—when Maxim Kuzmich proposed to Elena Gavrilovna. Maxim Kuzmich turned pale, turned crimson, trembled and hadn't the strength to lift a chair when the time came to force "I love you" from his big mouth.

B. Which situation in exercise A uses irony to give depth to a character? Explain your answer.

C. Which situation in exercise A uses irony to heighten suspense?

D. Locate and read, or reread, "The Interlopers," by Saki, or another story selected by your teacher. On a separate sheet of paper, cite one example of irony in the story. Name the type of irony, and tell its purpose in the story.

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USING IRONY

1. Write a short dialogue in which one person's words mean one thing to the other, but mean something else to the reader.

2. Briefly outline a plot that makes use of situational irony. Remember, what actually happens in your outline will be different from what your reader expects to happen.

3. Describe a scene that uses irony to convey the idea that a character will remain an individual and not be "just like everyone else."

4. The setting is a railroad station. A man and a woman are waiting for a train to arrive. Describe the next scene. Use irony of any type to add humor to the moment.

5. Write a character sketch. Show how a person's life is consistent: attitudes, occupation, clothing are all related to one another. Then insert an ironic twist to add another dimension to the character.

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Appendix F

- Mythology Pre-test

How the World Began, According to the Ancient Greeks

Part I
Identify the power of the following or it's mythological significance when appropriate.

1. Gaea
2. Uranus
3. Titans
4. Chaos
5. Oceanus
6. Tethys
7. Hyperion
8. Thea
9. Rhea
10. Themis
11. Cronus
12. Cyclopes
13. Hecatonchieres
14. Tartarus
15. Night
16. Furies/Eumendies
17. Atlas
18. Neptune
19. Jupiter
20. Neptune

21. Pluto

22. Vesta

23. Ceres

24. Golden Age

25. Silver Age

26. Age of Bronze

27. Age of Iron

28. Prometheus

29. Epimetheus

30. Pandora

31. Mount Olmpus

32. Deucalion

33. Pyrrha

Part II
Answer the following questions in complete sentences and with as much detail as possible.

1. According to the Greek understanding, what ended the chaos of the world?

2. Why did Uranus hate some of his children? What did he do to them?

3. How many children did Cronus have? Did he cherish his children?

4. What ended Jupiter's friendship with Prometheus?

5. How did Jupiter (Zeus) punish Prometheus?

6. How did Prometheus manage to outsmart Jupiter?

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Appendix G

- Shakespeare Pre-test

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Name_____
Date_____
Hour_____

Shakespeare Background Quiz
Please respond in complete sentence

1. When was Shakespeare born? (m/d/yr)

2. Where was Shakespeare born?

3. How many plays did Shakespeare write?

4. How many of Shakespeare's plays were tragedies?

5. How old is Shakespeare when he dies?

6. Did Shakespeare ever marry? Why or why not?

7. What is the time frame of the "lost years" and to what does it refer?

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8. In respect to the Globe Theater, where do the commoners observer the play?

9. How did people know when plays are being performed?

10. How many sides does the Globe Theater have?

11. Where did the "rich" people sit when observing a play in the Globe?

12. When was the Globe Theater built?

13. How big is the stage in the Globe Theater?

14. How many people could the Globe seat?

15. What mythological story is Romeo and Juliet based on?

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Appendix H

- KWL Chart

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THE KWL

Topic: _____

K now	W ant to know	L earned

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Appendix I

- Posttest – Multiplication and Division of Decimals

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2 Chapter 2 Test, Form 1B

1. Which symbol makes 13.54 ● 13.45 a true sentence? 1. _____
   A. < B. >
   C. = D. None of the above

2. Order 6.24, 6.08, 6.009, and 0.6 from least to greatest. 2. _____
   A. 0.6, 6.009, 6.08, 6.24 B. 6.24, 6.009, 6.08, 0.6
   C. 6.24, 6.08, 6.009, 0.6 D. 0.6, 6.08, 6.009, 6.24

Round each number to the underlined place-value position.

3. 3.0591 3. _____
   A. 3.05 B. 3.059 C. 3.06 D. 3.1

4. 1.2431 4. _____
   A. 1.24 B. 1.241 C. 1.243 D. 1.250

Estimate by rounding.

5. 18.75 + 6.16 5. _____
   A. 23 B. 24 C. 25 D. 27

6. 12.8 × 7.7 6. _____
   A. 301 B. 344 C. 51 D. 294

7. $6.1\overline{)71.77}$ 7. _____
   A. 10 B. 11 C. 12 D. 13

8. Estimate 97.5 + 98.2 + 97.9 + 98.1 by clustering. 8. _____
   A. 388 B. 392 C. 396 D. 500

Multiply or divide.

9. 25 × 0.096 9. _____
   A. 2.4 B. 2.5 C. 24 D. 25

10. 0.61 × 2.9 10. _____
   A. 1.769 B. 2.03 C. 2.30 D. 2.5

11. 2.0503×10^4 11. _____
   A. 205 B. 2,050.3 C. 20,503 D. 205,030

12. 0.001 × 0.567 12. _____
   A. 0.000567 B. 0.5 C. 0.567 D. 567

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2 Chapter 2 Test, Form 1B (continued)

Multiply or divide.

13. $0.256 \div 0.16$ — 13. _____
A. 0.16 B. 1.6 C. 1.7 D. 1.8

14. $3.6\overline{)18.036}$ — 14. _____
A. 4.05 B. 4.5 C. 5.01 D. 5.1

15. $1.423\overline{)8.538}$ — 15. _____
A. 12.1 B. 5 C. 6.1 D. 6

16. $0.645 \div 0.031$ — 16. _____
A. 20.81 B. 22 C. 0.02 D. 2.08

17. Express $\frac{9}{11}$ as a decimal. — 17. _____
A. $0.\overline{818}$ B. $8.\overline{181}$ C. $0.8\overline{1}$ D. 0.8

18. Write 1.2666... using bar notation. — 18. _____
A. $1.2\overline{6}$ B. 1.26 C. $126.\overline{6}$ D. $126.\overline{6}$

19. Express $\frac{7}{4}$ as a decimal. — 19. _____
A. 0.175 B. 1.75 C. 1.75 D. 17.5

20. Complete: 3.64 kg = ? g. — 20. _____
A. 0.364 B. 36.4 C. 364 D. 3,640

21. Complete: 2,725 m = ? km. — 21. _____
A. 0.2725 B. 2.725 C. 27.25 D. 272.5

22. Write 73,450 in scientific notation. — 22. _____
A. 7.345×10^4 B. 73.450×10^3
C. 73.450×10^4 D. 734.50×10^2

23. Write 973 in scientific notation. — 23. _____
A. 0.973×10^3 B. 9.73×10^2
C. 9.73×10^3 D. 97.3×10^1

24. Ken walked 3.5 miles more than Jorge. If Ken walked 11.25 miles, how many miles did Jorge walk? — 24. _____
A. 7 mi B. 7.75 mi C. 14.75 mi D. 15 mi

25. Lee buys 100 postcards for his business. If each postcard costs 19¢, how much did he spend? — 25. _____
A. \$1.90 B. \$19.90 C. \$19 D. \$190

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Appendix J

- Chapter 4 Posttest -- Using Number Patterns, Fractions, and Percents

Name _____ Date _____

4 Chapter 4 Test, Form 1B

1. By which number is 8,358 divisible? 1. _____
   A. 5 B. 6 C. 10 D. 9

2. By which number is 1,296 *not* divisible? 2. _____
   A. 2 B. 6 C. 9 D. 5

3. Find the prime factorization of 42. 3. _____
   A. $2 \cdot 3 \cdot 7$ B. $3 \cdot 3 \cdot 7$ C. $3 \cdot 14$ D. $2 \cdot 5 \cdot 5$

4. Find the prime factorization of 81. 4. _____
   A. $3 \cdot 3 \cdot 3$ B. $3 \cdot 5 \cdot 7$ C. $3 \cdot 3 \cdot 3 \cdot 3$ D. $3 \cdot 3 \cdot 9$

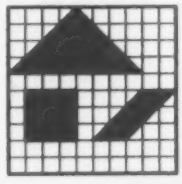
5. Find the next two terms in the sequence 11, 12.7, 14.4, 16.1, ... 5. _____
   A. 17.8, 19.5 B. 14. 4, 15.5 C. 17.2, 18.4 D. 18.1, 20.1

6. Find the sixth term in the sequence 1, 4, 9, 16, 25, ... 6. _____
   A. 30 B. 36 C. 49 D. 35

7. Find the GCF of 18 and 54. 7. _____
   A. 6 B. 18 C. 9 D. 12

8. Find the GCF of 36, 60, and 72. 8. _____
   A. 6 B. 12 C. 36 D. 18

9. Write a percent to represent the shaded area. 9. _____



   A. 9% B. 16% C. 38% D. 31%

10. Express $\frac{72}{81}$ in simplest form. 10. _____
    A. $\frac{24}{27}$ B. $\frac{7}{8}$ C. $\frac{3}{4}$ D. $\frac{8}{9}$

11. Express 20 doctors to 25 doctors in simplest form. 11. _____
    A. 20:25 B. 10:12 C. 4:5 D. 5:6

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4 Chapter 4 Test, Form 1B (continued)

12. Express 0.125 as a fraction in simplest form. 12. _____
A. $\frac{1}{8}$ B. $\frac{1}{6}$ C. $\frac{3}{8}$ D. $\frac{1}{5}$

13. Express $\frac{3}{5}$ as a percent. 13. _____
A. 3.5% B. 35% C. 60% D. 6%

14. Express 75% as a fraction in simplest form. 14. _____
A. $\frac{1}{4}$ B. $\frac{3}{4}$ C. $\frac{4}{5}$ D. $\frac{1}{5}$

15. Find the LCM of 15, 25, and 125. 15. _____
A. 375 B. 125 C. 5 D. 275

16. Find the LCD for $\frac{11}{12}$ and $\frac{1}{8}$. 16. _____
A. 96 B. 88 C. 12 D. 24

Replace each ● to make a true sentence.

17. $\frac{13}{28}$ ● $\frac{17}{30}$ 17. _____
A. > B. < C. = D. ×

18. $\frac{5}{9}$ ● $\frac{7}{12}$ 18. _____
A. > B. < C. = D. ÷

19. Eunsook plans to open a holiday savings account with $350 on June 1. How much should she deposit each following month in order to have $800 in her account by December 1? 19. _____
A. $60 B. $65 C. $70 D. $75

20. A bag contains 4 blue, 5 red, 1 green, and 2 white marbles. If you draw a marble at random, what is the probability of drawing a marble that is *not* red? 20. _____
A. $\frac{7}{12}$ B. $\frac{5}{12}$ C. $\frac{1}{4}$ D. $\frac{1}{3}$

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Appendix K

- Chapter 7 Posttest – Applying Fractions

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7

Chapter 7 Test, Form 1B

Round to the nearest whole number.

1. $2\frac{2}{7}$
   A. 0 B. 2 C. 1 D. 3 — 1. _____

2. $5\frac{1}{9}$
   A. $5\frac{1}{2}$ B. 6 C. $5\frac{1}{4}$ D. 5 — 2. _____

Estimate.

3. $\frac{7}{8} + 3\frac{1}{16}$
   A. 5 B. 2 C. 4 D. 3 — 3. _____

4. $11\frac{2}{3} \div 1\frac{4}{5}$
   A. 11 B. 12 C. 10 D. 6 — 4. _____

Add or subtract. Write each sum or difference in simplest form.

5. $\frac{2}{3} + \frac{3}{8}$
   A. $\frac{5}{11}$ B. $\frac{5}{24}$ C. $\frac{1}{4}$ D. $1\frac{1}{24}$ — 5. _____

6. $\frac{9}{11} - \frac{1}{2}$
   A. $\frac{7}{22}$ B. $\frac{10}{13}$ C. $\frac{29}{13}$ D. $\frac{9}{22}$ — 6. _____

7. $2\frac{1}{8} + 1\frac{5}{12}$
   A. $3\frac{3}{10}$ B. $3\frac{5}{96}$ C. $3\frac{1}{4}$ D. $3\frac{13}{24}$ — 7. _____

8. $10\frac{1}{6} - 4\frac{3}{14}$
   A. $5\frac{20}{21}$ B. $6\frac{1}{4}$ C. $6\frac{1}{10}$ D. $5\frac{1}{4}$ — 8. _____

9. Usually Emory rides his bicycle $5\frac{4}{5}$ miles a day. Today he didn't have much time, so he rode half his usual distance. How far did he ride?
   A. $2\frac{7}{10}$ B. $2\frac{9}{10}$ C. $2\frac{4}{10}$ D. $3\frac{4}{10}$ — 9. _____

Multiply. Write each product in simplest form.

10. $1\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{3}$
    A. $6\frac{1}{2}$ B. $\frac{3}{13}$ C. 6 D. $\frac{16}{5}$ — 10. _____

11. $\frac{3}{5} \times 5\frac{5}{8}$
    A. $3\frac{3}{8}$ B. $5\frac{1}{8}$ C. $6\frac{3}{8}$ D. $3\frac{1}{8}$ — 11. _____

Solve each equation. Write the solution in simplest form.

12. $p = 2\frac{5}{6} \times \frac{1}{3}$
    A. $3\frac{1}{6}$ B. $1\frac{8}{9}$ C. $\frac{17}{9}$ D. $\frac{17}{18}$ — 12. _____

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7 Chapter 7 Test, Form 1B (continued)

Solve each equation. Write the solution in simplest form.

13. $3\frac{1}{3} \times 4\frac{1}{2} = q$ 13. _____
A. $7\frac{5}{6}$ B. 15 C. $\frac{19}{5}$ D. $3\frac{4}{5}$

14. $1\frac{1}{7} \times 2\frac{1}{3} = s$ 14. _____
A. $\frac{15}{21}$ B. $\frac{8}{3}$ C. $2\frac{2}{3}$ D. $3\frac{17}{21}$

Complete.

15. $4\frac{1}{2}$ pt = ? c 15. _____
A. 2.25 B. 8 C. 10 D. 9

16. ? gal = 18 qt 16. _____
A. 16 B. 2.25 C. 4.5 D. 9

Name the property shown by each statement.

17. $\left(\frac{7}{8} \times \frac{1}{9}\right) \times \frac{2}{3} = \frac{7}{8} \times \left(\frac{1}{9} \times \frac{2}{3}\right)$ 17. _____
A. commutative B. associative
C. identity D. multiplicative inverse

18. $\frac{2}{8} \times \frac{1}{7} = \frac{1}{7} \times \frac{2}{8}$ 18. _____
A. commutative B. associative
C. identity D. multiplicative inverse

Solve each equation. Write the solution in simplest form.

19. $\frac{1}{3}t = \frac{5}{6}$ 19. _____
A. $\frac{5}{18}$ B. $2\frac{1}{2}$ C. $\frac{1}{2}$ D. $3\frac{5}{6}$

20. $u = 2 \times 2\frac{1}{3}$ 20. _____
A. $1\frac{1}{6}$ B. $4\frac{1}{3}$ C. 3 D. $4\frac{2}{3}$

21. $r = 3\frac{3}{7} \div 2\frac{2}{9}$ 21. _____
A. $1\frac{19}{35}$ B. $7\frac{13}{21}$ C. $2\frac{43}{63}$ D. $1\frac{2}{7}$

22. $2\frac{3}{4} \div \frac{7}{8} = x$ 22. _____
A. 3 B. $\frac{7}{22}$ C. $3\frac{1}{7}$ D. $\frac{88}{28}$

23. $w = 4\frac{1}{4} \div 2\frac{1}{2}$ 23. _____
A. $1\frac{5}{8}$ B. $1\frac{7}{10}$ C. $6\frac{3}{4}$ D. $1\frac{3}{4}$

24. Find the perimeter of a rectangle 4 feet wide by $16\frac{1}{2}$ feet long. 24. _____
A. 41 ft B. $20\frac{1}{2}$ ft C. 66 ft D. 648 ft

25. Find the circumference of a circle whose radius is 2.75 feet. Round to the nearest tenth. 25. _____
A. 8.6 ft B. 17.3 ft C. 17 ft D. 8 ft

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Appendix L

- Irony Posttest

English 9H

Part I

Read each of the following carefully. Then mark your choice on the answer key.

a. dramatic irony
b. situational irony
c. dynamic irony
d. verbal irony
e. none of the above

1. Molly's mom bought her an ugly green sweater with purple and green dots. When she asked her friends at school the next day, her long time enemy, Janice said "You look gorgeous in that sweater. It's really you!

2. I couldn't believe it! The fire station is on fire! Whom do I call now?

3. Monica never suspected that her closest friends waited with bated breath behind the furniture in her living room to give her the best surprise party she ever had!

4. A(n) _____ lacks the ____ plot of a novel although they resemble each other in other respects.

   a. short story...complicated
   b. satire...novel
   c. essay...involved
   d. none of the above

5. Dramatic irony occurs when the ____ knows more than the _____ in the literature.

   a. reader...characters
   b. characters...readers
   c. reader...writer
   d. main character...secondary character
   e. none of the above

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Matching: Mark the letter of the number that matches the type of irony represented by each statement.

A. verbal irony
B. situational irony
C. dramatic irony

6. Montresor calls Fortunato his friend.

7 Fortunato's name suggests good luck and fortune.

8 Montresor says, "I [drink] to your long life."

9. Montresor plots a murder during a time of festivity.

10. Fortunato says, "I will not die of a cough." "True," says Montresor.

11. The reader knows Montresor's plans.

12. Fortunato dresses like a fool and is treated like one.

Appendix M

- Mythology Posttest

MYTHOLOGY : HOW THE WORLD WAS CREATED ACCORDING TO THE ANCIENT GREEKS

CHAPTER 1

PART 1 Mark the letter which corresponds to the appropriate number.

1. Gaea	A. bears the world on his shoulders
2. Uranus	B. Mother Earth
3. Silver Age	C. married her brother
4. Titans	D. confusion
5. Cronus	E. age where life was an eternal springtime
6. Cyclopes	AA. underworld
7. Hecatonchieres	AB. children of Gaea and Uranus
8. Tartarus	AC. hundred hand monster
9. Jupiter	AD. age where seasons were created
10. Golden Age	AE. swallowed his children
11. Prometheus	BA. son of Cronus who was not swallowed
12. Pandora	BB. could see into the future: adviser to Zeus
13. Pyrrha	BC. age where man sinks into utter degradation
14. Age of Iron	BD. Prometheus' son
15. Epimetheus	BE. brother of Prometheus; Pandora's husband
16. Deucalion	CA. one-eyed monster
17. Atlas	CB. Overhanging Heavens
18. Rhea	CC. beautiful woman; means all gifts
19. Bronze Age	CD. Deucalion's wife
20. Chaos	CE. age where man uses arms; goes to war

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PART 2: : Choose the letter of the best answer.

21. Which of Cronus' children was saved by their mother?
    A. Juno
    B. Jupiter
    C. Neptune
    D. Pluto
    E. Vesta

22. Who helped Gaea get her children out of Tartarus?
    A. Jupiter
    B. Cronus
    C. Uranus
    D. Prometheus
    E. None of the above

23. Who killed Uranus?
    A. Prometheus
    B. Cronus
    C. Jupiter
    D. Gaea
    E. None of the above

24. Who sprang from Uranus' blood?
    A. Hecatonchieres
    B. Giants
    C. Cyclopes
    D. Furies
    E. Both B & D

25. Uranus hated some of his children so he
    A. swallowed them
    B. killed them
    C. sent them to the underworld
    D. gave them away
    E. None of the above

26. Pandora marries
    A. Prometheus
    B. Jupiter
    C. Cronus
    D. Epimetheus
    E. None of the above

27. All of the following was unloosed out of Pandora's jar **EXCEPT**
    A. pain
    B. evil
    C. hope
    D. disease
    E. poverty

28. A dowry is
    A. hope and luck
    B. wealth of the bride
    C. given to the wife by her husband
    D. wealth of the married couple
    E. None of the above

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29. Jupiter refused to give man fire because
    A. man was evil
    B. man was weak
    C. man was lazy
    D. man would think he was equal to the gods
    E. Both A & C

30. Prometheus
    A. was a counselor to Jupiter
    B. gave man fire
    C. was the son of a Titan
    D. all of the above
    E. only A & B

PART 3 SHORT ANSWER: Answer each of the following questions in complete sentences.

31. What is a myth?

32. Name three things myths attempt to explain .

33. Name three places we can find references to mythology.

34. Name three kinds of people who are interested in mythology.

35. Name three reasons why we study mythology.

36. How did Jupiter punish Prometheus?

37. How do Deucalion and Pyrrha re-people the earth?

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Appendix N

- Shakespeare Posttest

Shakespeare Quiz

Part I: Forced Choice

1. What is Shakespeare's first name?

   a. Bill
   b. William
   c. Michael
   d. Christopher

2. What is strange about the death of Shakespeare?

   a. no one know the cause of his death
   b. his body was never found
   c. he died on the same date as his birth
   d. his mother dies in child birth and he blames himself for her death.

3. Shakespeare was born

   a. April 13, 1592
   b. April 23, 1580
   c. April 3, 1616
   d. April 23, 1564

4. When Shakespeare died he was

   a. 52
   b. 48
   c. 86
   d. unknown

5. What does the phrase "the lost years" refer to in Shakespeare's history?

   a. The period right after the death of his twins
   b. A period of time when Shakespeare became a common bank clerk and wasted his talent
   c. A period in Shakespeare's life that historians have no record of his activities
   d. The period of time prior to Shakespeare's divorce from his wife

6. In what city was Shakespeare born?

   a. London
   b. Avon
   c. England
   d. Stratford

7. Shakespeare married a woman who was

   a. older than he
   b. younger than he
   c. same age

8. Shakespeare was an only child

   a. True
   b. False

9. Shakespeare's children were named

   a. Hamlet, Judith and Susanna
   b. Susanna, Hamnet and Juliet
   c. Hubert, Sarah and Judith
   d. Judith, Hamnet and Susanna

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10. Shakespeare organized a theatrical group called

    a. Lord Chamberlain's Men
    b. The Queen's Men
    c. The Globes
    d. none of these

11. Plays originated in

    a. London
    b. Athens
    c. Greece
    d. South America

12. The ruling monarch during Shakespeare's life was

    a. Queen Mary and King Henry
    b. Queen Elizabeth and King Richard
    c. Queen Elizabeth ruled alone
    d. Queen Elizabeth and King James

13. Shakespeare's theater was called the

    a. The Swan
    b. The Theater
    c. The Globe
    d. The Palace

14. How many sides does Shakespeare's theater have

    a. 4
    b. 6
    c. 8
    d. 9
    e. 12

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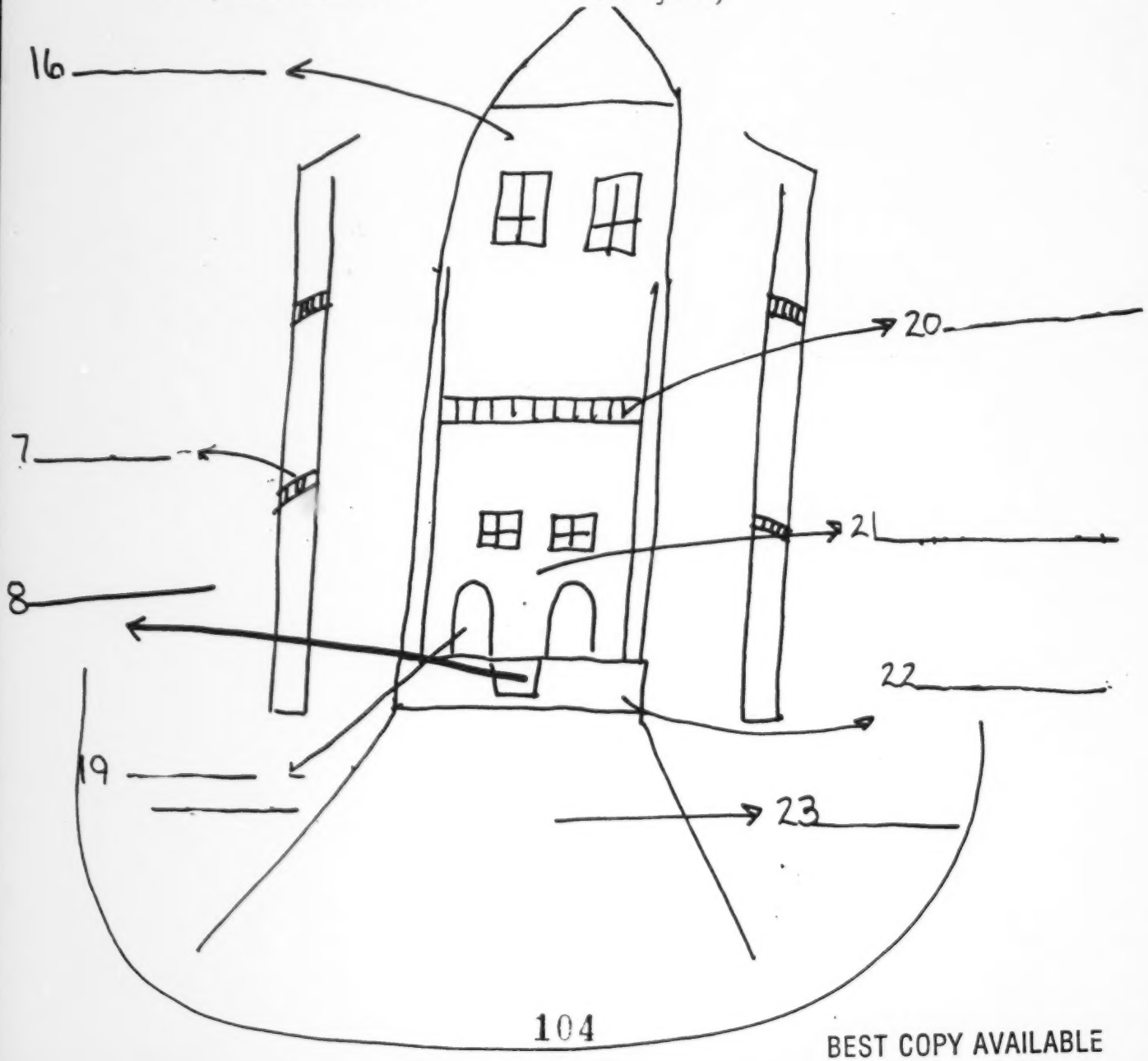
15. The roof of Shakespeare's theater was made out of

a. moss
b. tile
c. the was no center roof
d. glass

Part II: Labeling

a. heaven
b. outer stage
c. upper stage
d. proscenium doors
e. inner stage
ab. pit
ac. hell
ad. gallery



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Appendix O

- Portfolio: list of required material

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Appendix O

- Portfolio: list of required material

  1. Pre-test and posttest for each unit
  2. Pre and post KWL charts for each unit
  3. One (1) classroom or homework assignment per week
  4. Reflection paper on why a piece of work was selected per week
  5. Reflection on improvement or growth from pre-test to posttest

Appendix P

- Portfolio reflection questions

Appendix P

- Portfolio reflection questions

  1. Was this a difficult assignment? Why or why not?
  2. What did you learn from this activity?
  3. What would you do differently if you had to do this assignment again?
  4. How did this assignment make you feel?
  5. Why did you select this assignment for your portfolio? Did you improve? Is it your best work?

Appendix Q

- PMI Chart

PMI CHART (PLUS/MINUS/INTERESTING QUESTIONS)

P (+)	
M (-)	

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Appendix R

- Improvement Rubric

Appendix R

- Improvement Rubric

a. Beat your base score by more than 10 points.....15 bonus points

b. Beat your base score by 5 to 9 points.....10 bonus points

c. Score within 4 points of your base score.....05 bonus points

d. Get a perfect paper..... 20 bonus points

e. Score within 5 points of a perfect paper.....10 bonus points

***Students will only be allowed to receive bonus points based on one criterion per posttest. Should a student meet more than one criterion, they will be given the higher amount of points.

Appendix S

- Portfolio Checklist

Appendix S

MATH PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST 1ST QUARTER

_____ Assignment for week of Sept. 18 (5 pts.)

_____ Reflection for week of Sept. 18 (5 pts.)

_____ Assignment for week of Sept. 25 (5 pts.)

_____ Reflection for week of Sept. 25 (5 pts.)

_____ Assignment for week of Oct. 2 (5 pts.)

_____ Reflection for week of Oct. 2 (5 pts.)

_____ Assignment for week of Oct. 9 (5 pts.)

_____ Reflection for week of Oct. 9 (5 pts.)

_____ Assignment for week of Oct. 16 (5 pts.)

_____ Reflection for week of Oct. 16 (5 pts.)

_____ Assignment for week of Oct. 23 (5 pts.)

_____ Reflection for week of Oct. 23 (5 pts.)

_____ Pre-test & posttest of your choice during 1st quarter showing your improvement. (10 pts.)

_____ Reflection on pre-test & posttest. (10 pts.)

_____ Pre-test & posttest of your choice during 1st quarter showing your improvement. (10 pts.)

_____ Reflection on pre-test & posttest. (10 pts.)

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